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Theodore T. Munger, D. D.

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ESSAYS FOR THE DAY

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BY

THEODORE T. MUNGER



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TO
H. K. M.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE CHURCH : SOME IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS . . .	1
THE INTERPLAY OF CHRISTIANITY AND LITERATURE	53
NOTES ON THE SCARLET LETTER	103
THE SECRET OF HORACE BUSHNELL	155
A LAYMAN'S REFLECTIONS ON MUSIC	183
A COCK TO ÆSCULAPIUS	215

**THE CHURCH:
SOME IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS**

“It is a blessed thing that in all times, and never more richly than in the Reformation days, there have always been other men to whom religion has not presented itself as a system of doctrine, but as an elemental life in which the soul of man came into very direct and close communion with the soul of God. It is the mystics of every age who have done most to blend the love of truth and the love of man within the love of God, and so to keep alive or to restore a healthy tolerance. . . .

“Confused, irregular, forever turning inside out, forever going back upon itself, the history of Christianity, however superficially we glance at it, seems to bear witness to three things, — first, that every hard bigotry is always on the brink of turning into tolerance, and every loose tolerance of hardening into bigotry; second, that on the whole, positive belief and tolerance are struggling toward a final harmony; and third, that true tolerance belongs with profound piety and earnest spiritual life.”—BISHOP PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Tolerance*, pp. 35 and 37.

“As soon as the pure doctrine and love of Christ are comprehended in their true nature, and have become a vital principle, we shall feel ourselves as human beings, great and free, and not attach especial importance to a degree more or less in the outward forms of religion: besides, we shall all gradually advance from a Christianity of words and faith to a Christianity of feeling and action.”—GOETHE.

THE CHURCH: SOME IMMEDIATE QUESTIONS

THE last census informs us that there are in the United States one hundred and forty-seven religious denominations. Our curiosity is piqued as to the reason for this multiplicity and presumable diversity. If "nothing walks with aimless feet," may there not be some divine purpose and scientific reason in this prodigal outburst of religious energy? It shows at least in how many forms the instinct of religion reveals itself, and how surely the hopes and fears and aspirations of mankind turn to religion for answer. Trivial as these sects often appear, they by no means reveal a weak side of human nature, but rather — if any criticism be made — a crude and untaught side. It is interesting also to note the central ideas out of which they spring. Yet few of them are original. All are based on Scripture read with literal exactness, and the special

points usually refer to baptism, prophecy, the form of the Church, eschatology, and not a few involve the knottiest points in metaphysical theology, — such as a sect in Texas that flourishes under the name, “Old Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists.” Others are perpetuations of the controversies of the Reformation, while the will and divine sovereignty and election — conditioned or unconditioned — are debated and reconciled as of yore. The proper day for the Sabbath and the millennium each represents a denomination, while the speedy end of the world stands for quite an enduring church that couples with its expectation “the sleep of the dead.” These stand chiefly for outspoken beliefs of what lie hidden in the creeds of the older and greater churches, — survivals of what may still be found in ecclesiastical libraries.

This state of things had an early beginning. The New World was baptized in religion. Columbus no sooner touched the shore than he planted the cross. Church and conquest swept over the continent, — the grace of one poorly redeeming the cruelty of the other. The Church came to Jamestown with a full quota of clergy along with more vagabonds ;

and a hard time Governor Berkeley had with them, but he thanked God that in addition to these troubles there were no schools. In Maryland, the Church fared somewhat better. In its first decade it won the distinction of opening the way in London to the establishment of the first foreign missionary society in the world. There also the Catholic Church found permanent footing, and spread an odor of toleration that still sweetens the air. The Friends found peaceful lodgment in Pennsylvania, where they multiplied, — dividing at last into two bands, — but have nearly run their race, having borne clear witness to the eternal truth of the Spirit. The Dutch brought to New York the Church as set forth by the Synod of Dort, while the Scotch stood by the Westminster Confession. The Pilgrims and the Puritans brought the latter with them, and also a full-fledged democracy that gave the keynote to the nation and dominates it still. Or, as Lowell puts it: “Puritanism, believing itself quick with the seed of religious liberty, laid, without knowing it, the egg of democracy.”

These were the few first sources of the Church in America, but hardly a generation

had passed before the churches began to divide and to make room for others, until there came to be the present variety and multiplicity.

How shall we explain this strange phenomenon? Is it due to the fact that when the early settlers found themselves free in matters of religion they leaped exultingly into the privilege? Or did the break with the Old World dissolve all ties as the people came to realize that their whole life was to be here and must be suffered to shape itself in all things as it would? Doubtless this unrestrained play of the individual mind had much to do with it, and — being without king or bishop — they found a peculiar satisfaction in cleaving a denomination in twain, or in founding one without a hierarchy.

But not all the organizations named in the census are to be accounted as churches. Some do not belong to the solar system, — wandering stars thrown out of orbital movement by some dreamer who had a vision, or has discovered new meaning in a Greek particle; their significance, though numerically large, is too slight to call for measurement. And there are churches — notably the Mormon —

so monstrous and so remote from religion that one is tempted to say of them what Blake said of the tiger, "Did he who made the lamb make thee?" And others—such as the Christian Scientist—that have not sufficiently emerged from their humorous and tragical absurdities to justify their claim to be called a church. In what follows we shall speak of churches, denominations, and sects as interchangeable terms,—only declining to use the definite article as the special property of any one organization. Nor shall we use much space in dealing with the older contentions of the churches. Earnest and intelligent men to-day do not discuss the apostolic succession, nor the forms of baptism, nor endless punishment, nor the verbal inspiration of Scripture. The banners that used to wave with vigor over these doctrines are still carried, but the battles do not rage around them; indeed, there are no battles beyond slight skirmishes,—only questions as to what is best to be done. Perhaps the most immediate question now before the churches pertains to this multiplicity already mentioned.

If it be the evil that it is generally assumed to be, it is still possible that there may be

some soul of goodness in it if we will observingly distill it out. It should moderate criticism to remember that if it is an evil it is an inevitable one. The Church can neither keep out evils nor immediately rectify those that are in. The first point in the complaint is that the multiplicity engenders rivalry and hatred; but rivalry is not hatred. It is only the ferment at the root that starts the sap along its organic path to the branches. Hatred is of the devil, but rivalry is the spice of human enterprise. Besides, it is not true that the denominations hate one another, except in small towns where all bounds of reason are passed and intolerance holds full sway. The picture of a Western village with a church for every hundred people is a distressing one; but take any city, East or West, and the picture changes. That it is over-churched is the least evil it is to be charged with. That there are two churches of different denominations side by side is a slight matter in comparison with the fact that there are parties and conflicting schools of thought in all denominations — most of all in those which make the loudest claim to unity — that test the spirit of charity far more keenly than ecclesiastical separation.

A Calvinistic and an Arminian church side by side keep good fellowship in comparison with churches that differ over high and low, or old and new school. Fences are no enemy to good neighborhood, but their absence often is. The fact that "France has forty soups and one religion, while England has forty religions and but one soup" is no sign that the former is the more godly nation. Were there in France no Holy Catholic Church, or along with it a multitude of true churches, and were there in England no Established Church, but as many as the people chose to make, both nations would be happier and better than they seem to be at present. It is the unalterable conviction of all believers, and of all thinkers as well, that the Church is one, and that religion is one; it is as fixed as the unity of God, and is because of his unity, but it is always an open question as to what constitutes oneness. As God is infinitely complex in form but one in spirit, so religion may wear many forms and bear many names, and yet have one spirit. Complexity is not the enemy of unity; it is rather the cause of it, but the unity is of another kind than form or name. The multiplicity may be excessive, and then

the bramble and forest must yield to make room for better and fewer growths. But the world is slowly finding out that the less the State meddles with the Church, and the less churches meddle with one another, the better it is for all concerned. Religion is an ethereal thing, so personal and sacred that every fine soul holds it to be a matter between himself and God.

No mistake can be greater than to suppose that shutting up religious truths in binding forms — either of creed or church — acts otherwise than as a fetter. Forms preserve but deaden. They provoke a return to the heresies against which they protest, and rebellion against the authority which binds them. The general outcry against the denominational spirit, unlovely and unthrifty as it is, would, if it should prevail, shut the churches up within barriers sure to be soon broken down, or drive them into the open desert of total unbelief. There is one thing that man loves more than religion, and that is freedom: he has an instinct for each, but the latter conditions the former; when it is cramped religion itself shrivels.

Before we let our thoughts and plans go too

far in bemoaning the long list, it would be well to assure ourselves that it is a cause for regret. "Our unhappy divisions," as they are sometimes called, might be more unhappy if they were absorbed in large unions. The experiment of uniting the Prussian Evangelical Church with the churches of the other German States — all holding substantially the same faith — has not proved a success. The General Superintendent, Poetter, recently said: "I am not sure it is such a good thing. We have only put on one uniform, and are not more really united in spirit and doctrine than before;" and he adds these timely words: "Why should all the regiments be dressed alike or have one name? Zeal is often more stimulated when each body of Christians has the greatest opportunity to develop its own individuality." It is an interesting fact that these united bodies of Lutheran churches are at variance over the question as to the best method of holding their own against the Roman Catholics, — a question not impossible here in the future; in which case it is clear that the smaller the denomination that takes it up the better for all concerned, as it has all the elements of a long and bitter quarrel.

Nor should it be forgotten that a union for the sake of economy and effectiveness overlooks not only the fact that a union in belief could not thus be secured, but also if gained might develop and bring to the front once more the differences. These differences are real and do but sleep. The broadest line of cleavage in doctrinal belief in the Protestant churches in this country is that between Calvinism and Arminianism. Edwards devoted his great powers to stemming the growing tide of the latter, but in vain. He is honored by scholars and historians for his greatness and his service to the State, as his centuries come round, but the multitude is insensible to him while it pours out millions of money in memory of Wesley. The majority still confess the Westminster Creed, but while Presbyterians and Methodists live peacefully side by side and work effectively in social reforms—hardly knowing any difference—if they were organically related, not to say united, the mixture of oil and water would but feebly describe their condition, so fundamentally do they differ. The proverb, “Do not stir up a sleeping dog,” is not invidious, but prudent.

It would be equally difficult to bring the

Congregational churches to a fresh assent to the Westminster Confession, to which the Presbyterian Church has recently renewed its adherence with some slight changes. Fraternal in their relations even to the extent of an open path between their pulpits, the number of Congregational ministers is steadily lessening who are ready to assent to the Confession in order to fill them. But greater hindrances to union than this stand in the way. The immediate and pressing question in the New England Congregational churches is, — Can the schism of a century ago be healed? If there is reason for union anywhere it is here. There are signs as deep as the yearning of heart for heart, and reasons as weighty as the fact that what ought not to have happened ought not to continue, why this mutual movement — if it can yet be called such — should be fostered and consummated when the hour is ripe, far off though it be.

Conditions should be well considered when such a question as a general union or federation of denominations is proposed. If there is to be union, it should not be made on a basis of mere economy and technical effectiveness, but on congeniality of thought and feeling,

on like ethical and spiritual conceptions, on sympathy with humanity in its highest and most pressing needs, and — not a slight matter — on historic affiliations. It may be roughly said that if you prick the skin of a Congregationalist — orthodox or liberal — you will find a Puritan. There is need enough of him to-day, and he is still here, — ready for action if the needless schism were overcome. If there is reason for union anywhere in the wide world of denominations, it is where the *disjecta membra* of ancient Congregationalism are scattered in New England; but if it implies also union with denominations that still cherish the dogmas against which the Unitarians long ago justly protested, it would defeat the most desirable movement in the churches now in sight.

The era of division or separation seems to be drawing to an end. It is doubtful if we soon shall see another denomination of importance that can be called Christian. There is great activity in the theological world, but it does not move in the direction of creedal organization. There is no less theology, — for theology will never go out of fashion, — but it looks toward explanation if not toward extinc-

tion of existing creeds, and to other changes that drop out or reinterpret old meanings and bring in new. Careful distinctions and definitions that determine the exact amount of freedom or necessity in the will are disregarded, because Christian faith is not now approached on that side of our nature. Emphasis is transferred from the field of speculation, where chiefly the denominations originated, to the field of action, to psychology and human society. The pressure of the past is less felt, or is felt as reverence rather than as authority. The fact of change — whatever its cause — can no longer be resisted, and the chief question that burdens thoughtful minds in the Church is, at what speed and by what road will it move into the region where it must go; also, what shall be left behind and what carried forward? The main question of all is, how to retain steadiness of mind in the confusion and rush that fill the air. Serious minds tremble before the changes that come thundering down upon them.

Not less perplexing is a sudden apparent dying out of interest in the churches, with corresponding indifference to religion in those classes where one would expect it to abide.

Reasons of widest variety are given to account for this strange lapse and confusion which we take to be the chief feature of the religious condition of the Church at present. The causes oftenest alleged are evolution in science and the higher criticism. The vast majority of those who compose our one hundred and forty-seven denominations fail to comprehend their import beyond that they stand for change, which is always the signal for fear and outcry among the ignorant. But the more intelligent class, who perceive how thoroughly evolution modifies all thought and theories, and at the same time find it hardly recognized, or named only to be denounced in the pulpits, stay away,—not because evolution is not preached, but because the whole order of thought pertaining to it is passed by, and they find themselves in a dead world and out of gear with all that is said and with most of what is done. In the long run the man of thought will worship in the world in which he thinks; and the more thoughtful he is, the more difficult he finds it to coöperate with a church that denies the ruling ideas and accepted facts that he encounters every day and receives as his own.

The same thing happens in connection with the higher criticism. It calls for reconsideration of cherished ideas of the inspiration of Scripture, — a truth so inwoven with the thoughts of religion in the mind of the average man that he is thrown into confusion whenever it seems to be questioned, and is ready to lapse into whatever gulf of doubt is best suited to his disposition. In any case, he becomes doubtful of the Church, and grows languid in his faith, or takes up some mild form of charity to fill its place in his conscience. The Church denounces or pities him, or makes some halfway concessions to the new thought and interpretation intended to break the force of their meaning; but instead it only awakens his resentment, for he has learned that evolution is no more partial than gravitation, and that the higher criticism deals simply with facts.

The Rev. Mr. Campbell of London, recently speaking at Northfield, was asked from the audience, "how he got along with truth and evolution." He replied, "Truth *and* evolution? Evolution is truth." The question and answer indicate the relative positions of the churches in this country and in Great Britain.

They are a generation in advance of us in their management of most theological questions. The contrast is due to the fact that preaching which involves evolution, eschatology, and biblical interpretation no longer disturbs the people; these subjects are not technically preached but implied in the sermons, while here it is felt that the pulpit keeps something back. This is both true and not true. Few preachers in New England decry evolution and the higher criticism, and many wisely consider them as not proper topics for the pulpit if treated as pure science. The trouble lies in the preacher's failure to come fully under these ruling ideas, and of course the people doubt either his sincerity or his ability to grasp them. The old saying, "like people, like priest," is now only half true. When people and priest do not sympathize they part company. The preacher must conquer the people if he would keep them; but he must be converted through and through to what he believes. When he fully submits himself to modern thought, and follows where it leads, he finds himself at the very heart of the revelations of God in nature and in Scripture. Such preachers are heard without disturbing

the faith of simple believers or repelling those who think in the modern way. The pulpit has no more immediate task before it than to break into this open secret of effective preaching, — that is, preaching which the intelligent as well as the simple will hear gladly. The difficulty is great because of the different points of development at which the churches stand. The point of approach is, of course, or should be, the Theological Seminaries; but their relation to the churches and the tenure of their existence are such that while modern thought in science and exegesis is quietly accepted and even taught in nearly all, it is not pushed to its full meaning and real conclusions as to doctrine. Hence they fail to lodge in the students that commanding belief that should inspire and color their life and words. Young men go to the churches with esoteric notions instead of burning convictions, not wholly sorry to escape the reproach of being infected with “new ideas.” Probably no more delusive word ever crept into popular nomenclature in theology than that of “the good old Gospel.” Those who most use it to-day hold a theology that was once scouted as new, while those who are striving to bring it into

accord with the words and spirit and ruling ideas of the Christ are denounced as bringers in of a new Gospel.

The Theological Seminary — as a part of the University — is the determining factor of the theological belief of the churches; it exists chiefly for that end. It is not a gymnasium for teaching a certain amount of easily attained knowledge and a drill in sermonic composition. Instead, its function is to teach students to see and feel the full force of a few eternal laws that govern the world and uphold society, and through them lead men to realize and achieve their destiny as the children of God. The Theological Seminary finds no data for a scientific, not to say practical, theism — the question of questions — until it searches it out and teaches it from evolution. Thus it finds ground for the truth that man has always sought for, and in higher moments asserted — the divine immanence in all things, and the like nature of God and man. If there is to be a theology in the future, it will be found in this region, in connection with the University which is to play a large part in its reconstruction; that is, theology will spring from the whole circle of human knowledge.

Only in this way can it bring the divine and the human into conscious relationship. To cut out of ancient creeds intolerable parts, leaving a mangled remainder to live on, is a weak expedient which, if persisted in, results in a degenerate church and ministry; for strong men shrink from feeble measures. If it is true that the pulpit is degenerating, it is in no small degree due to the fact that clear-eyed candidates will not put new wine into old bottles, and are equally unwilling to enter a ministry where there are neither wine nor bottles.

A brief chapter in the history of the Church on this matter is not to be expected, for the reason that the mass of the people must be brought up to the point where they will listen to the University. The ancient and the later churches there took shape and gained their permanent form. As they drop their outworn cast they must go again to the University for renewal. Stated otherwise, the man of to-day will turn to the highest and widest sources for the grounds of his belief. A universal religion must have as broad a basis. But slow as the change will be, the first fruits of such study are already a marked feature of the Church.

They are to be found more and more in those pulpits trained to drop the phraseology and atmosphere of the University, but wise enough to keep its method of thought. They preserve a just balance between the opportunism that is so clamorous yet often so useful, and the idealism in which is hid the real meaning and power of religion. They have the confidence bred by wide studies in many fields; the humility taught by the fact that no studies can compass the whole of any truth; the earnestness and cheer that spring from the sense of having found their way out of a theology of negation and blind authority into a world where all knowledge utters one voice, and all life has but one law and one end. The enthusiasm of these preachers does not cry in the street nor fly to retreats. They may go to Northfield, or they may stay away. It chooses its own method, but wherever it leads, there is a man whose life is fed from within his own soul, who believes that to bring man into the consciousness of God is his supreme duty — felt with such passion as only a clear-seeing soul feels before unquestioned and eternal truth.

A man thus trained is quick to realize the

confusion into which the churches have come in regard to creeds. He will sympathize with Mr. Brierley's view as stated in the London "Christian World" (of July 2, 1903), who supplements his own insight with quotations from great names, which we give at length: —

"There is to-day a feeling, not only amongst doubters, but in the most religious minds, a feeling so widespread that it may almost be called universal, that the creeds which in the orthodox historic churches stand for Christianity are, in their present form, the survival of a thought-world which has been outgrown, and that they are consequently a hindrance to faith rather than its bulwark.

"The feeling crops up in the most unexpected places. Here, for instance, is Westcott, who, speaking of the Thirty-Nine Articles, says: 'It is that I object to them altogether, and not to any particular doctrines. I have at times fancied it was presumption in us to attempt to define and determine what Scripture has not defined. . . . The whole tenor of Scripture seems to me opposed to all dogmatism and full of all application.' From another side John Wesley, after one of the fullest experiences ever given to mortal of the action of

religion in human life, declares in his old age : 'I am sick of opinions. I am weary to bear them ; my soul loathes the frothy food. Give me solid, substantial religion ; give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man, a man full of mercy and good faith, a man laying himself out in the work of faith ; the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with those Christians wheresoever they be and whatsoever opinions they are of.'

"The citation may be fittingly closed with these remarkable words from John Henry Newman : 'Freedom from symbols and articles is abstractedly the highest state of the Christian communion and the peculiar privilege of the primitive Church. . . . Technicality and formalism are in their degree inevitable results of public confessions of faith. . . . When confessions do not exist, the mysteries of Divine truth, instead of being exposed to the gaze of the profane and uninstructed, are kept hidden in the bosom of the Church far more fruitfully than is otherwise possible.'

"These witnesses had all signed creeds ; they belonged to churches which bristled with dogmatic propositions. Yet what is evident is that at the back of their minds lay a conscious-

ness, not formulated, and therefore all the more powerful, that the strength and vitality of the Church lay quite elsewhere than in its tables of doctrine. And as we look through the history of the Christian centuries we find everywhere confirmation of this truth. The creeds arose out of the speculative, not the religious spirit. The 'heretics' speculated first, and the Church met them with counter speculations of its own. To wade through the literature of those early centuries, the literature which lies back of the creeds, is a discipline of incredible tediousness, but it helps one greatly to an estimate of the value of these products."

Mr. Brierley goes on to say:—

"This kind of inquiry wherever pursued gives the same results, and they are not favorable. But while theology and the Church, in the matter before us, yield only a negative outcome, another experience, in a different field, has meantime been accumulating its treasures, and, at an opportune moment, is able to offer them for the elucidation of our problem. That half-expressed feeling of the unsatisfactoriness of the Church formulas, as either a ground or a statement of the faith,

which we found in a Westcott, a Wesley, and a Newman is, when we turn in another direction, suddenly illuminated, and shown as by a flash in its true logical relations, by the light which comes from another sphere.

“While the Church has been busy with its propositions, another power has been quietly rising by its side, and influencing with an ever-increasing potency the sphere of human affairs. This power is science, in its application to the arts of life. We talk of creeds. What are the creeds of science and how does it express them? When we have understood the bearings of that question, and of its answer, we shall possess, if not the solution of our theological problem, at least a substantial help towards it.”

The solution will not be complete, however, unless by science is meant the whole encyclopædic view of the world, especially as it embraces human experience. If we do not find the illustration and vindication of the Faith in the heart and life of humanity, we shall find them nowhere. If we can interpret the human heart as it feels and hopes and strives in the natural relations of life; if we can measure the play of the human mind in

the family, in society, and in the nation,—we shall find both the field of the Gospel and the materials for a creed if we care for one. The thing to be done at present is not to crowd upon men a system conceived in some way to be true, nor to bind them down to a hard, literal, undiscerning reception of texts, but to set forth the identity of the Faith with the action of man's nature in the natural relations of life; to show that the truth of God is also the truth of man. Truth is not actually truth until it gets past dogma, and beyond authority for an external revelation, and awakens an intelligent and responsive consciousness of its reality; it does not actually reach the man until then, and all previous action is unreal or merely disciplinary, useful indeed, but partial and without spiritual power.

Here lies the vocation of the preacher to-day, yet his appeal to life must not consist in vague generalization and moralizing, nor in psychic analysis, unless the subject itself is weighty and lies close to the duty or the question of the hour. It is a very strenuous order of preaching demanded in this transition from the old to the new, and it is often met by giving up great themes half true for trivial

ones wholly true, — a dash of poetry, an indefinite ethic, a fastidious culture, a string of anecdotes that hide the truth they would make plain, an avoidance of phrases that have been the watchwords of all holy living and high achievement since the world began, often without a church, or ritual, or discipline that goes to the bottom of character, — all seeming to show with how little religion we can get on, or how slight a thing it is when we have it; — better a century more of decadent Calvinism than such substitutes as these.

The creed of life, if we may so term it, will be definite, searching, severe in its penalties and as relentless as they are in life itself, urgent both on the restrictions and the possibilities of life, and never forgetful of those inspirations that always come when the full meaning and import of life are revealed. Its sacrifice will be more real than that of a vicarious oblation, for it will be of self and on the cross of obedience to truth and duty. There will be no original sin to confuse the mind, but enough of one's own to be kept down and turned to moral uses. Its heaven will not be so clear and golden as that of old, but it will take on such color and form as

overcoming life may give it, and become as real and present as life itself. The confusion of to-day will not be ended by blowing it away into thin mist, nor by explosions of criticism, but only by clear vision now opened by real life in a real world.

But the immediate question is not so much what the Church shall believe, as what it shall do. We find here the same confusion, which, however, is not wholly a bad sign. So long as the field of its faith lay in another world and its end was the salvation of the soul, its duties were few if great, and its thought subjective rather than social. All this is changing — slowly but in the right direction. Without set purpose of its own, and without knowing why, the churches are becoming aggressive in objective ways. There is thus coming about what has been called a “Priesthood of the People,” who are returning to the primitive idea of religion, and are taking the work of the Church into their own hands, and — for the most part — are dealing with it in wise ways; certainly in the way of their own humanity. By their own thoughts and through their own selves they are determining what the Church shall be. It is thus that humanity

is fulfilling itself and bringing out the divine image.

Remote as the cause may seem, this change is largely due to the democratic spirit that pervades the nation. A new conception of society and of human relations has led men to feel that their duties to others are equal if not paramount to those due to themselves. This impregnating idea is reinforced in no small degree by the pulpit, so far as it has come under the influence of modern thought and learned the real meaning of the New Testament. But the people have outrun the preacher and the church. Strong spiritual movements lay hold of the masses sooner than upon those who live and think among established theories. The Spirit is a wind and blows freest in the open. Consequently there are to-day movements going on in the churches of which they are only half aware or treat but slightly. One must think twice before one speaks lightly of such lay bodies as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Christian Union, the Christian Endeavor Society, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Epworth League, the Baptist Union, the Student Volunteer Movement, the Brotherhood of Andrew

and Philip, the Girls' Friendly Society, the King's Daughters, and others of like nature. These societies stand for an idea and a movement. No matter how crude or trifling they may appear, nor what mistakes they make, they cannot make more or worse than the churches from which they spring yet do not desert. If they are too enthusiastic, and too gregarious, they are still unconscious protests against the frequent meagreness and dullness of the churches. With the instinct of young life, they look to life for a field of action. Their philosophy is all the truer because it is so unconscious. They organize and discipline themselves into service, and learn how to bring things to pass. They are persistent and catholic and free. They insist on work, and are eager for results. They demonstrate the value of the *ecclesia* and its naturalness, and so avoid the barrenness of extreme individualism. It is a part of the confusion and blindness in the Church-world that these movements have not been more closely examined and measured both pro and con. It might be expected that the churches would welcome such possible recruits in the desperate conflict that lies before them. They have undertaken to do the one

safe and most necessary thing to be done in this world ; and that is *to do good*. Almost everything else is questioned, or soon will be. The only refuge of the churches is in planting themselves on this eternal thing which cannot be shaken. If these simple and spontaneous efforts to meet this prime duty shall prove failures because ill conceived or overlaid with the faults of youth, they will at least have shown the churches where they are, and what they are to do when they are routed out of their strongholds of dogma by the critics — as they are sure to be. To wait, depending on what may be left, is blindness ; to betake them to what the critics have made doubly clear, and the unperturbed spirit of the young has unconsciously attempted, is the only salvation.

But however it be, the churches should look well to their *charities* as a hiding-place against the coming storm. If men or churches are doing good, they can carry a heavy load of heresy or dead orthodoxy and still live. These charities consist in most churches of missions wherever they are needed, — next door or in the antipodes, education as the vehicle and prop of religion, deeds of humanity, and all

works for promoting personal and civic righteousness. The conditions will shape the works. There is a spiritual thrift by which the Church lives, and to which it is as distinctly bound as the individual.

And here we are brought to consider, by way of comparison, one of the most immediate questions before us, that of the Roman Catholic Church. Professor Roswell Hitchcock of Union Theological Seminary, not long before his death, said: "We should be very careful how we treat the Catholic Church: it has already been of great service to us and we shall need it again. It is defending the family, and is a stronghold of law and order." The need which he did not name has been met by its position on the labor question. President Carroll D. Wright has recently said: "I consider that the Encyclical of Leo XIII. on the labor question has given the foundation for the proper study of social science in this country. It is a *vade mecum* with me, and I know that it has had an immense influence in steadying the public mind."

The Family; Obedience to Law; Labor:—these are the problems with which the nation and the churches are struggling, but no church

is doing more to safeguard these vital interests than the Roman Catholic. The question how it happens to have this influence may go by; that it has it is sufficient at present.

It would be idle to prophesy that the church which first set foot on the continent will stay longest. It is enough that it will stay and is already a power. It may retain a formal and harmless allegiance to the Pope, and thus even draw from him something of use, — like the last Encyclical of Leo XIII.; but if the Propaganda should urge the temporal power, King John's answer to the Pope's Legate would be repeated here in no uncertain tones: "No Italian priest shall tithe or toll in our dominions." It would be worse than idle, it would be calamitous, to oppose the Catholic Church in the present juncture of our affairs. Protestantism has not only nothing to fear, but much to learn from it, as to organization, worship, and fundamental ethics. It contains what George Eliot called "the ardent and massive experience of man." It is enough that it is a Christian Church. Its theology is substantially Augustinian orthodoxy, which it shares with large Protestant bodies. Ecclesiastically, it is at variance with Protestant-

ism, but that question will take care of itself. It is full of superstitions, most of them harmless, while some hide a truth. It stands for sound ethics, for humanity, for learning, and also for science and progress and modern thought, but in a somewhat hampered sense, — encyclically denied, but practically recognized.

It is specially needed so long as the growing majority of our immigration is Catholic and largely Latin. The country could not safely contain these hordes nor govern them without Catholic influence. Our hope is that they will be Americanized. We cannot in the future see a day when the Catholic Church will not be of measureless value to the nation; nor can a day be foreseen when the nation will not be Protestant. In this sure diversity lies its safety and also its strength. What of wisdom and Christian faith twenty centuries have wrought out should not fail of use in this New World; what is not of truth and wisdom may be left to its own self-eviction.¹

¹ "American Romanists do not, as a rule, care so very much about the Papal Supremacy. They submit to it, but they do not especially love it." — *The Rev. William R. Huntington*, D. D.

The churches of the country, regarded as a whole, have been from the first of immediate and permanent value. Over and over again they have saved and are still saving the nation. To forget it is folly; to undo it is disaster. All lovers of their country, and all who have skill in detecting the play of cause and effect, are watching closely the course of things, to see if they are still fulfilling the high vocation to which they gave themselves at the beginning. There are those who take a closer view of the situation, and ask if religion itself is to die out of the hearts of the people. These questions do not spring from a pessimistic temper, but from the apprehensions of thoughtful minds as they watch certain tendencies that are steadily gaining ground. The most noticeable is the lessening hold of the Church upon the people at large. The industrial classes in great numbers are deserting it, with the result that those who still remain are forced into becoming a class, and are no longer *the people*; and as the note of universality is growing less distinct, the pulpit is a waning influence. While the great preachers, like Beecher and Bushnell and Brooks, are rare, there never was a time when the average of

ability in the pulpit was so high as it is to-day. Nevertheless it is heard by lessening congregations, and certainly with diminished influence. The industrial classes might be won back if the Church should bring itself into profounder sympathy with the eternal laws of justice and humanity and equality that are its foundation. A plainer word and a far different administration are needed before Labor returns to the Church.

Graver apprehension is felt on account of the note of question and uncertainty that pervades the Church. Everything is doubted, or is vehemently defended because it is doubted. The result is perplexity and languid interest; the ties are easily dissolved; the great realities—or what have been regarded as such—fade out; so much is gone, why not all? It would be useless to call attention to these things if they were signs of fatal decay, or anything but signs of a temporary condition due largely to confusion of thought in matters of faith. The Sunday newspaper, the secularization of Sunday, the absorption in business and social folly are effects, not causes. The Church will hold its own against such things when it has attained—not returned—

to the faith that awaits it. But this is the crucial point. Can the Church endure the strain of the transition from faith in what have been regarded as the foundations of religion, to those that lie before it and will not be put aside? "Faith follows opinion," as Aristotle long ago said, but it often follows afar off. The scientific habit of thought is recognized generally but not specifically. Exception is made of religion where it faces the old questions of miracle, inspiration, and eschatology; and as these questions are thought to turn on the infallibility of the Bible, the stream of criticism is now falling heavily upon its students, with corresponding confusion among the people. If they could be led — by the pulpit and the religious press — to accept Tillotson's definition of infallibility as "the highest perfection of the knowing faculty," the greatest stumbling-block now in the way of the churches would be removed. And if some such view of miracle as that in Bushnell's "Nature and the Supernatural" could once more be made familiar, it would go far to silence the alarms that are sounded by those who know neither Bushnell nor the

scientists of the day. The people could be quieted if the preachers would let it appear where the Church stands or may stand on these subjects, rather than raise questions which, while unanswered, are sapping their faith.

That these and like apprehensions indicate a general breaking up of the churches, or that they involve the whole world of religious thought, is not to be allowed. It is not the final result that is to be feared, but the long and weary tract of ignorance and timidity and mistaken faith and invested interests and blind conservatism that must be crossed before the inevitable result is gained. To let matters drift and suffer the churches to lapse into ethical clubs, or, by violent reaction, into peaceful retreats where neither thought nor doubt enter, is not the American way of handling difficult questions. They will be settled when the churches suffer themselves to be led out of regions of thought and methods of action that lie behind them, and enter into the New World that time and knowledge have opened. The present confusion will not yield to minor remedies, but only to fuller know-

ledge of the subjects in hand. This knowledge is slowly growing, but it is hindered by the very democracy that is the life-blood of every true American Church ; the ignorant masses hang on the skirts of those who would fight the battle that cannot be shunned. No radical change of organization and especially no consolidation are now wanted ; they would simply increase and bring out the lingering majority that hinder those who are leading them out of their confusion and darkness into order and light.

If we have seemed to speak only of the darker side of the Church, it is because we have touched its immediate questions. A more general view would put it in the same light as the nation, for the Church is both its representative and, externally, its product. It reflects the nation, and shares its prevailing characteristics. For though the churches have largely made and shaped the nation, it is now exerting a return influence upon them. The Puritan gave the nation its political cast and temper of mind, but he did not impose upon it a religion. That was left to take care of itself ; hence its one hundred and forty-seven churches ; — a calamity say some, while others

see in them the very result that was to be expected when the field of religious thought was left wide open. The multiplicity of churches reveals several things of great importance ; — first, man's ineradicable instinct for religion. The choice was open, as it never before had been, and he chose religion as his supreme portion ; second, it secured an almost universal spread of religion, for so it works when it is free ; third, it reveals an unconscious tendency on the part of the churches to coördinate themselves with the nation, — a process that will come out more and more as time goes on. It will embrace both what is bad and what is good. The result cannot be escaped and must therefore be accepted. But before deprecating this fate it may be well to ask if the co-ordination will spring out of the fundamental and ruling ideas of the nation, or from the accidents and incidents of its passing history, — out of its nature, or the chance phases it displays. If the former, there will be as little need to despair of the Church as of the Republic. Had there been at first one predominant Church, and had coördination between it and the nation been attempted even in the slightest degree, we might be repeating the

conflict now going on in England between the established and the free churches.¹

Overmuch contempt has been poured upon this multiplicity of churches. It has given religion — perhaps not of the highest order, but such as was at hand — to a vast number of people to whom it was religion indeed, and whom it saved from barbarism, — a danger narrowly escaped. But the multiplicity, so far as it is excessive, will cure itself. Education, modern thought, and the tendency to part with a local and take on a general type of belief, will bring to an end the least worthy. The rest are offshoots or excisions from the greater churches, to which they will naturally return. They were not without some real justification, though they may not have been wise, and were in almost every case the logical outcome of the prevalent doctrine of plenary inspiration of the Bible. With the incoming

¹ Principal Tulloch of St. Andrews said of Robertson, that “he knew very well, that, whatever words we may use, it is simply a fact — which no theory whatever can alter — that men will differ in religious opinion, and that the higher view, therefore, is to admit the validity of dogmatic differences, and to point to the true Centre, the Spirit of Christ, in which all differences, if they do not disappear, assume their true proportion.” — *Religious Thought in Britain during the Nineteenth Century*, p. 317.

of a truer theory, the way will be open for return without need of apology on either side.

The question varies when we come to the greater and more thoroughly intrenched churches. In some of them the terms of membership are too severe, and the theology is too rigorous in its dogmatism to go along with the nation whose ruling idea breathes freedom and equality. Hence men, especially, shrink from assuming membership, not from lack of religious feeling, but because of their unwillingness to separate themselves from the great body of the people; — the moral of which is that the terms should be broader and more catholic. By necessity the early Church was a peculiar people — favored by the Hebrew idea of separateness; also a necessity so long as it stood out against a gross barbarism. But that day is passed. The essential idea of Christianity as the divine expression of humanity leads men to fellowship, and a sensitive nature shrinks from the Church except as it stands for and with a common humanity rather than apart from it.

The question varies somewhat when we come to the Liturgical Churches. This element was left behind when the Puritans came

hither; they might well have gone back for it, had the Established Church then been in a condition to give anything to anybody. Instead, Wesley sent over Methodism, — a possession worth all liturgies. The Presbyterian Church has a full and rich liturgical service, but it is unused. The Episcopal Church provides one for those who wish so to worship. By virtue of its liturgy and its doctrine pertaining to children it is winning a large place among the churches, and would win a larger were it not that — unnecessarily one would think — it is tied up by certain ecclesiastical notions and rubrics that violate democratic ideas, and run athwart the course if Church and Nation are to move on together. Were these restraints removed, it would open a path that many would delight to walk in; but the paths in which Americans prefer to walk are those in which two can walk abreast within as well as without chancel bars. The nation forbids nothing in ritual or belief, and welcomes variety so long as there is unity of the spirit, but it requires that all churches shall think in accord with its spirit and its institutions. This is inevitable. The nation cannot say one thing and the churches another. The domi-

nant spirit of the greater will silently find its way to the whole, and a free nation will create a free church by however many names it may be called. We do not say that the nation creates its religion, but only that it shapes and subdues it to its own complexion.

For its interpretation and real meaning the Church must go to the University ; and never was the necessity greater than to-day. The Puritan in the wilderness never forgot the University in England. Harvard and Yale from the first have steadily aimed to develop it into encyclopædic fullness, as the best means of getting at the truth in all important subjects. A college education is one thing ; a university is another. One is a drill ; the other is a court where reliable verdicts are looked for when all the evidence is in. It is there the Church must continually go to correct ancient mistakes, to measure the urgency of new truths, to clear itself of entanglements when old and new conflict, to shut out the clamor of the mob howling for a new dogma or decrying an old one, to keep eye and ear open for fresh visions of God and new accents of the Holy Ghost, and above all for seeing to it that great matters are held in their due

proportion, and that all matters worthy of attention are studied until they are brought into reasonable harmony with one another and so conduce to the one end of all study — *truth*. The University is thus the refuge of the churches for help in all those questions that perplex them. Such has been its function in all ages, and such it will continue to be ; for in the long run the man who knows most about a subject is the one who is at last heard. All this is qualified, however, by the question, whether the University is truly one, and so fit to treat important subjects in a universal way. The Church is finding its way out of the world of particular or special truths into that of universal truths. It is feeling after its own greatness and real mission. It might aid Missionary Boards to decide whether they shall resign their charters, or still hold the Church to be the guardian and minister of a universal and absolute religion. If it is such, it must have a universal exposition ; otherwise it goes with halting steps, — overweighted by its conscious greatness and betrayed by its apparent weakness. It is a part of the confusion of thought in the churches at present that there is a subtle doubt as to

whether or not Christianity is a local or a universal religion, — a question that involves its very nature.

The increasing necessity of the Church is enlightenment, and for this we must look to the University. Nothing of value is being said to-day on theology or ecclesiastical usage or practical ethics that does not proceed from it or bear its stamp. But the University must be of the true Comenius type, — based on nature and crowned with faith in God, balancing all attainable knowledge, and thus able to teach harmonious truths and true living.

More work lies before the churches than any so far achieved. All are on trial, however permanent they may claim to be. Nearly all have grown out of Old World conditions, either by extreme repulsion or exact reproduction. All wear a look of incompleteness, and easily fall into factions and schisms. There is a strange mingling of strength and weakness, absurdity and sound reason, mediæval gloom and modern light, bigotry and breadth, depths of triviality and summits of shining greatness, and — strangest of all — the most vital thing in the world, its free growth checked and thwarted. It would be a dismal

outlook were it not that it can be regarded in the light of an evolution that has had as yet no final retrogression. What are deemed its faults and defects have their parallel in every phase of society. Were the Church faultless, it would be a wonder rather than an inspiration. It is still the moulder and the leader of the people, and lies at the bottom of nine tenths of the charity that relieves suffering and promotes virtue and fosters education. Above all, it refines manners and ratifies the laws by keeping alive a sense of eternal law. Christianity is the religion of humanity ; it is that or nothing. Humanity will have its own, and at last it will have it in perfect accord with its perfected self. Man will no more fail to go on without striving for the highest expression of himself than he will stop in his evolution, —and that is not in his own power. There are behind and within him spiritual and moral forces that will as surely carry him on to the perfection of these forces as those which have brought him thus far were sure in their action. There are no slips in a divinely organized universe. Prophet and poet and the indestructible sense of selfhood are not amiss on this point.

The Church is in its analytic stage of development, and awaits its synthetic period when its various elements of truth and power shall be brought into harmonious relations. It is now insisting on a few things, and antagonizing or ignoring many. But such is not the true church. It is a choir of chanting worshipers, it is a hospital, a school, a charity house, a company of preachers, of missionaries, of students; it is a university in which all of God's works and ways and all human institutions are massed for universal ends. Toward some such goal is the Church moving under the divine energy lodged within it. Nothing is diviner in the Christ than the impossibility to identify Him with any church, and yet He is in all; at some point each touches Him, and because of that touch they are moving toward Him, — sloughing off some corruption, dropping some worn-out superstition, expurgating their creeds of mistaken exegesis, reinterpreting his words until they no longer flame with retribution in after-worlds, putting reason and spirit in place of literalism that defied them, — a process that is surely going on. It is not, however, a process of mere elimination. Denial is not pro-

gress nor a way to freedom. True progress involves complexity, but it is made up of what is high and fine and beautiful and strong by reason of its pure unity.

• As to the final form of the Church, it would be idle to forecast it. That there will be one only, save in some high mystical sense, belongs to the childhood of faith ; to contend for it now is to mistake its movement. Yet the Church is not a dream of our higher nature, nor a superstition of our lower nature. It is a vital thing, and stands not for a condition, but for a movement. Where it will lead, is not easy to determine. It is not moving in the prelatial way, but it will have organization ; nor in the ritualistic way, but it will have a ritual that is not bound by rubric lines. It will not follow the path of Calvin or of Arminius, but its freedom will not be unchartered. It will not accept Anselm's answer to his question, "Cur Deus Homo?" but it will insist on the divine humanity, and find its goal somewhere in the region of this profound phrase, — at once mystical and historical and scientific, — a phrase that represents the whole play of our nature. And we would say with emphasis, that while the way will be traced along the

footsteps of great leaders of thought and through prophets and sacred books, no man nor church will be authoritative or other than a guiding and inspiring light. The power and the light that are always leading toward the unattainable goal are in man himself, in the development of his nature, — not as a mere creation of God, but as one in whom God is immanent, and is ever unfolding himself in human ways that are also divine. Hence, while it is to be expected that the word *trinity* will not be insisted on, and — as Calvin said — might better have not been used, the phrase Father, Son, and Spirit will pass into the language of the soul because it defines the forces by which man lives and fulfills his destiny. This phrase does not spring out of Nicene renderings, nor from any later or present forms of them, — all of which are more or less bewildering. Its roots go deeper down than the creeds — into man himself. When he has found himself he finds within him that which is in all nature, and he names himself a son of the Father of all; he knows himself as spirit, and he cannot otherwise define himself than as one with Him who was filled with the Spirit, and so was the Son of the Father. And

as for the Church, it has no office but to lead men to realize the divine humanity in themselves. Thus, yet by no easy path, they find their way into the Eternal Reality out of which they spring.

THE INTERPLAY OF CHRISTIANITY
AND LITERATURE

"The most remarkable piece of writing on education is in a book of Goethe's. . . . It is one of his last books ; written when he was an old man above seventy years of age ; . . . full of meek wisdom, of intellect and piety ; which is found to be strangely illuminative, and very touching, by those who have eyes to discern and hearts to feel it. This about education is one of the pieces in *Wilhelm Meister's Travels* . . . it has ever since dwelt in my mind as perhaps the most remarkable bit of writing which I have known to be executed in these late centuries. I have often said that there are some ten pages of that, which if ambition had been my only rule, I would rather have written, been able to write, than have written all the books that have appeared since I came into the world. Deep, deep is the meaning of what is said there. Those pages turn on the Christian religion, and the religious phenomena of the modern and the ancient world : altogether sketched out in the most aerial, graceful, delicately wise kind of way, so as to keep himself out of the common controversies of the street and of the forum, yet to indicate what was the result of things he had been long meditating upon. . . . He practically distinguishes the kinds of religions that are, or have been, in the world ; and says that for men there are three reverences. . . . The first and simplest is that of reverence for what is above us. It is the soul of all the Pagan religions ; there is nothing better in the antique man than that. Then there is reverence for what is around us, — reverence for our equals, to which he attributes an immense power in the culture of man. The third is reverence for what is beneath us ; to learn to recognize in pain, in sorrow and contradiction, even in those things, odious to flesh and blood, what divine meanings are in them ; to learn that there lies in these also, and more than in any of the preceding, a priceless blessing. And he defines that as being the soul of the Christian religion, — the highest of all religions ; ' a height,' as Goethe says (and that is very true, even to the letter, as I consider), ' a height to which mankind was fated and enabled to attain ; and from which, having once attained it, they can never retrograde.' Man cannot quite lose that (Goethe thinks), or permanently descend below it again ; but always, even in the most degraded, sunken, and unbelieving times, he calculates that there will be found some few souls who will recognize what this highest of the religions meant." — CARLYLE.

From "Inaugural Address at Edinburgh," *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, iv. p. 472.

THE INTERPLAY OF CHRISTIANITY AND LITERATURE

WHEN Christianity appeared in the world it might have been regarded in two ways: as a force requiring embodiment, — something through which it could work; or as a spirit seeking to inform everything with which it should come in contact.

It was both, — a force and a spirit, the objective and subjective of one energy whose end was to subdue all things to its own likeness. It was inevitable that Christianity as a conquering energy should lay hold of the strong things in the world and use them for itself. It was inevitable, also, that as a spirit it should work spirit-like from within, secretly penetrating into all things open to it, transforming them by its mysterious alchemy into forces like itself, drawing under and within itself governments, art, learning, philosophy, science, literature, and whatever else enters into society as shaping and directing energy.

Our theme is the interplay of Christianity

and literature, or, more accurately, the way in which Christianity has infused itself into literature, and used it for itself, making it a medium by which it conveys itself to the world.

We should not lose sight of the fact that Christianity had its roots in a full and varied literature, which was rich and profound in all departments except philosophy. The Jew was too primitive and simple-minded as a thinker to analyze his thought or his nature; but in history, in ethics, in imaginative fiction, and in certain forms of poetry his literature well endures comparison with any that can be named. Its power and value have been greatly weakened by a dogma of inspiration, — a dogma unknown and unnecessary either to Judaism or to essential Christianity, antagonistic to the nature of faith, a limitation and a hindrance. Truth is absolute, and inspiration, though it were sevenfold itself, could not make truth truer than it is. No sympathetic reader will deny that the Hebrew scriptures are full of inspiration, but he resents putting that inspiration into a rule or form, and refuses to read them under a notion of authority that bars up the avenues to the mind, and turns every mental faculty into a nullity. Inspiration is

its own witness and makes its own way. To formulate it into a dogma, and to lay that dogma as a requirement upon faith, is to smother the divineness of its breath.

It is sometimes said that Christ left no book, and that he did not contemplate one; and so men go searching around for the seat of authority, locating it now in an infallible Church, and now in Christian consciousness, and now in traditions and institutions; and, not finding any or all of these sufficient, they turn on the bookless Christ, and, as it were in defiance of him, put together some biographical sketches and sundry epistles, and formally declare them to be the divinely constituted seat of authority.

The religious world is in the full tide of contention over this authoritative inspiration, — with book and bell, with courts and bans and such fagots as this later age permits, — fagots past burning, and only capable of sending up a smoke that wreathes itself into sardonic forms, blinding the witnesses and provoking laughter in the spirits of the wise as they sit in the clouds and look down upon ancient tragedy turned to modern farce. Meanwhile the man of letters, the poet, the

student of human nature, the religious soul reads the Bible and says : Why all this ado ? I read and believe and am satisfied ; these scriptures find me — in Coleridge's phrase — and because they find me I believe them to be true : how can the truth be made more than itself ?

Christ indeed left no book, but he was not therefore a bookless Christ. His revelation was not so absolute as to cut him off from the literature of the past as something upon which he stood, nor from that of the future as something which might embody him. It is often made an object of study to find Christ in the Old Testament ; it were a more profitable study to find the Old Testament in Christ. His first discourse begins with a quotation from it, and he dies with its words upon his lips. It is not necessary and it would not be wholly true to say that the Hebrew scriptures gave shape and direction to Christ ; he was too unique, too original, too full of direct inspiration and vision to justify such an assertion, but he stood upon them not as an authoritative guide in religion, but as illustrative of truth, as valuable for their inspiring quality, and as prophetic of more truth and

fuller grace. His relation to them — using modern phrases — was literary and critical ; he emphasized ; he selected and passed over, taking what he liked and leaving what did not suit his purpose. They served to develop his consciousness as the Messiah, but they did not govern or determine that consciousness. We cannot think of Christ apart from this literature. It is not more true to say that it was full of him than that he was full of it.

Such being the case, we have a right to expect that Christ will go on investing himself in literature ; that Christianity will robe itself in great poems and masterpieces of composition as varied at least as those of Judaism. Judea had but small culture and not much genius for it, but it was full of inspiration ; it had, in some way, caught sight of the face of God and seen his glory. Hence its literature, — without form or proportion, but having something better than art, — namely, reality in the highest field of thought, — passion for righteousness. It was impossible that Christianity, which was itself inspiration and reality and righteousness, should not produce even a greater literature filled with these qualities and as wide and varied as

itself. As inspiration it demands expression, and the expression will take on the forms of the art it encounters and use it as its medium. But, of itself, inspiration calls for the rhythmic flow and measured cadence, even as the worlds are divinely built upon harmony and move in orbits that "still sing to the young-eyed cherubim." It was inevitable that a system so full of divine passion should call out a full stream of lyric poetry; that a system involving the mysteries of the universe and great cosmic processes should clothe them in subtle dramas and majestic epics; that a system so profoundly involving the nature of man should produce philosophy; that a religion based on ethics should evoke treatises on human society; that a religion so closely related to daily life should call out the various forms of literature that discuss and depict life. The appeal which Christianity makes to mind, the discipline it puts upon all the faculties, and, above all, the fact that it calls into harmonious and intense action the whole nature, — intellect, heart, will, conscience, — all this becomes a very school for the production of poets and philosophers and artists. That is, Christianity is correlated to litera-

ture, and calls for it as spirit calls for its proper form.

It is not amiss to say that Christ himself uttered much that is in the truest sense literature. It is not necessary to literature that it shall spring from the literary motive. It does not matter how it comes about, if it is the genuine thing. Christ was without the literary purpose, but that does not forbid us from counting the parable of the Lost Son as a consummate and powerful piece of literature. The great masterpieces do not spring primarily from the literary sense or purpose, but from human depths of feeling and duty. The absence of the literary motive leaves the inspiration freer. Enough of Christ's words are recorded to admit of classifying him in respect to literature. He is to be put among the poets, — not the singers of rhymes nor the builders of epics, but those who see into the heart of things and feel the breath of the Spirit. It matters not in what form Christ spoke, he was yet a poet. Every sentence will bear the test. Put the microscope over them and see how perfect they are in structure. Lay your ear to them and hear how faultless is their note. Catch their spirit and feel how true

they are to the inner meaning of life, how full of God, how keyed to eternity and its eternal hymn of truth and love.

The first literary products of Christianity in due form were the Epistles of St. Paul. It is difficult at present so to separate them from the veneration in which they are held as to look at them in a free and critical way. A prevailing dogma of inspiration shuts us out both from their meaning and their excellence as compositions. They are not treatises but letters, — one mind pouring itself out to others in a most human way for high ends. What freedom ; the current flowing here and there as the mood sways the main purpose, now pressing steadily on between the banks, now overflowing them, going off and coming back, sometimes forgetting to return ; careless but always noble ; delicate but always firm and massive, imaginative but always natural ; original, full of resource, giving off the overflow of his thought and still leaving the fountain full, often prosaic and homely, but as often eloquent and overwhelming in power ; a rough, hearty, and careless writer, but who ever wrote better, or to better purpose ?

I pass by the Apocalypse, that marvel of

sublimity and pathos and prophetic outlook and moral insight, — the sphinx of literature. Nor will I venture upon the Fourth Gospel, the latter part of which is so wholly the outpouring of the divinest Soul in his divinest hours that criticism and literary estimate seem profane when applied to it. I can but name the Church Fathers, — Justin who ingrafted philosophy upon Christianity, and inaugurated the study of comparative religions ; Clement of Alexandria, — Plato come again in Christian robes, a man of this century as well as his own, a writer who touched the centre of Christian theology in his doctrine of the Divine Immanence and of man as the divine image, too keen to be deceived by Adamic analogies and Jewish notions of expiation, a writer so rational and lofty in his thought that he can be classed in any of the higher orders of greatness ; Origen his pupil, — greater than his master, the first constructive theologian, the most brilliant of the Christian Platonists ; and Athanasius who stood up *contra mundum* and won in the conflict, fixing in the mind of the world a phrase of more worth than all literatures, — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Literature also may claim the Latin Fathers

who displaced the Greek conception of Christianity and put in its place one of local origin which dominated the Church for more than a thousand years, but never won the conquest over it that the Greek Fathers had achieved through their greater openness to the ancient Greek authors, — the chief original fountain of thought and art. The Latin Fathers fell under the moulding influence of Rome, a people without an original and thoughtful literature, and keyed to power rather than to philosophy. The Greek Fathers made a full alliance with Greek literature, and drew into their writings whatever was most spiritual and rational and human in the ancients; they baptized philosophy into Christianity; but the Latin Fathers, however familiar they may have been with the Greeks, and however much use they made of their writings, turned their backs on the Eastern theology as weak and unfitted to sustain a Church, and found in the Roman Forum and State a theological framework of a sort and on a level with the world around it. The Greek was a thinker and so created a literature; the Roman was an organizer and framed a social order. The Greek produced philosophies, the Roman sys-

tems. The Greek thought freely, the Roman within limits. These distinctions were mirrored in their literatures and in the form which they gave to Christianity. That which cramped the literature of Rome produced the same effect on its Christianity, making it a rigorous order of administration instead of a system of thought such as it had been under Greek influence. Both may have been necessary or inevitable in the evolution of Christianity, but the Roman form was fatal to literature. It is on this account that so long as the Augustinian theology held sway over the minds of men, literature held itself aloof from theology, or rather theology failed to produce literature. Hence there grew up a feeling that they are not good friends, — as Matthew Arnold indicates in his title “Literature and Dogma,” — setting one over against the other. There is little affinity between them; they belong to different guilds; they speak in different dialects; they are not at home in each other’s houses. The Latin theology was formal, arbitrary, external, and worldly in its working though not in its terms, — qualities that literature disdains. The poets, the men of genius, passed it by. Bereft of their humanizing in-

fluence, it grew harsh and narrow and hard, even as it is now seen to be in some quarters,—changing in the direction of its weakness and fault, and losing what of original divineness was in it.

What the result would have been if the Greek theology, with its friendly relations to Greek literature and philosophy, had not been supplanted by the Latin theology—devoid of a literary background, and antagonizing the spirit of literature—cannot be told. Heresy might have overwhelmed the Church, and Christianity might have been refined into a beautiful mysticism or a forceless philosophy unfit to cope with the rough world. The hard, strong setting of a theology of power and externalism—exponent and product of the Roman State—may have been necessary to guard the jewel of faith till the world should become softer and wiser. Meanwhile, however, it must go without the aid of its strongest ally, literature. Hence for centuries they went their separate ways. The Church sang its hymns of faith, often most sweet and melodious; the theologians and the schoolmen spun their systems, drawing upon all known sources of knowledge save the human heart,

all-wise concerning God and heedless of man, but no great spirit spoke aloud for human nature.

I hasten to name the exception, — Dante, “the spokesman of ten silent centuries,” as Carlyle called him, — the first if not the greatest name in Christian literature.

The “*Divina Commedia*,” regarded superficially, is mediæval, but at bottom it is of all ages. It has for an apparent motive the order of the Roman Church, but by a law of inspiration — transcendence of purpose — Dante condemned as a poet what he would have built up as a son of the Church. He meant to be constructive; he was revolutionary. By portraying the ideal, he revealed the hopelessness of the actual Church. He was full of error, — political, ecclesiastical, theological, — all easily separable from the poet and the poem, but at bottom he was thoroughly true and profoundly Christian. The Church had filled its cup of perversion to the full; theology was full of magical and magisterial conceptions; society was buried under tyranny, and man had almost forgotten that he was free. Dante comes forward, and while holding to the Church in his external purpose,

breaks with it when he begins to sing. Reversing Balaam, he cursed when he meant to bless.

Dante's inspiration consists largely in the absoluteness of his ethical and spiritual perceptions, and as such they are essentially Christian. Greek in his formal treatment of penalty, he goes beyond the Greek, and is distinctly Christian in his conception of God and of sin. In the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* he enters a world unknown outside of Christian thought. In the Greek tragedies mistake is equivalent to sin or crime, and led to the same doom, but the *Inferno*, with a few exceptions made in the interest of the Church, contains only sinners. In the tragedies, defeat is final even though struggle must never end; there is no freedom, no repentance and undoing; but Dante builds his poem upon the living free will, the struggling and overcoming soul. The mount of Purgatory rises high out of the sea and is not far off from Paradise. All speaks of will and moral choice and escape from evil and return to God. The entire play of thought is between sin and holiness, self and God, and the whole atmosphere is charged with freedom. It brought

to judgment the fatalism of the East and of the older literatures, and was prophetic of the new spirit that was rising in the West and was beginning to call for utterance. It tacitly rejected all doctrines of expiation by representing salvation as a moral process. The highest in human life becomes the guide to the heavenly life, and the pure passions of earth melt into the joys of Paradise. The scope of human nature is traced within moral lines, — from the frozen isolating hell of treachery — daughter of pride — to the white rose of Paradise, — purity enfolded by and dwelling in beauty. Dante contrasts widely with Milton, who wrote under a lack and an incumbrance that the Italian did not know. Milton had no Beatrice, no passion of love which by its purity became knowledge itself, and so compassed earth and heaven and all things. In other words, Milton's theology was based on power; Dante's upon grace. Milton accepted his theology at the hands of Puritanism; Dante drew his theology out of human life and his own heart. Starting thus with a formal and mechanical theology, Milton's great poem does not follow along the ways of the spirit and interpret humanity, but assumes

an arbitrary form. In sublimity he surpasses Dante; in naturalness he falls below him. By sheer dint of imagination he creates a world which so faithfully reflected the existing theology that for generations all English reading people went at death to Milton's heaven or hell rather than to the rewards and dooms of the Church.

Dante came both too early and too late to be caught in the meshes of dogmatism. The Church and not dogma, was in the ascendant. He partook instead of the new breath that was stealing over the world, awakening mind, reviving art and architecture. He is to be classed with the Cathedral builders, — a product and mouthpiece of the same divine inspiration. While they reared their arches and lifted their spires toward heaven he built his great verse. Cathedral and poem say the same thing; both lose themselves in the ecstasy of God.

Dante deserves our attention because through him Christianity first thoroughly entrenched itself in literature, and also because the "*Divina Commedia*" is one of the masterpieces of human composition and the foremost product of Christian literature. Schelling re-

garded it as "the archetype of all Christian poetry."

It need not be said at this stage of the study of Dante that the poem is not to be interpreted as an attempt to picture the next world. There is no time nor place in it. It is an allegory of human life, and the scene is in the soul of man. The gigantic imagery, the descending caverns of the Inferno, the painful hill of Purgatory, the rose of Paradise, — these mean nothing but moral facts and processes in the human heart put *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the form of eternity. "The threefold future world — I quote Mr. William T. Harris, to whom I am much indebted — "presents an exhaustive picture of man's relation to his deeds. Whatever man does, he does to himself; therefore the effects are found in himself." This is the sum and substance of Dante. Study him well and you will find this moral fact and process delineated with the utmost accuracy. So, too, is it the substance of many of Christ's parables, which are to be read in the same way, — *sub specie aeternitatis*, — and not as prophetic pictures of future condition. The parable of Dives and Lazarus is purely Dantean in character, and is

no more to be taken literally, or as including time and place, than is the *Inferno*, and—like it—is simply a graphic and startling picture of soul-conditions and processes.

The *Inferno* depicts the “first immediate relation of an evil deed to the doer;” it will continue as long as the deed continues, but it may give way to purgatory. Dante does not intend to classify sinners by putting some into hell and some into purgatory; the distinction stands for the stages of a process, or for different phases of sin. The sinners are not in the *Inferno* forever, but their sin is there eternally and hopelessly, and art requires a seeming identification of the sinner with his sin.

“Abandon hope all ye who enter here;”

that is the aspect and nature of sin. Sin is essentially hopeless; it points downward to ever descending depths and to despair. Such is its nature, but the nature of a specific thing does not override the greater nature which embraces God and his eternal love.

The *Purgatorio* is the secondary effect of sin,—the inevitable punishment burning the sinner with purifying flames.

In the *Paradise* there are good deeds which

have no reaction in punishment and suffering, and yield full and immediate bliss.

The "Divina Commedia," so far as it deals with ethics, is thoroughly Christian and contains well-nigh the sum of Christian morals. The atmosphere is that of freedom and accountability, and the keynote is hope that rests on love. God is no reflection of Roman power, but is

"The Love which moves the sun and other stars."

The doctrines of the Logos and the Trinity, of the Procession of the Spirit and its relation to the Universe, are presented in a way that renders them consonant with modern thought and links them to the Universe as it is unfolding under newly discovered laws. They fulfill also the loftiest and dearest Christian expectation. When Beatrice draws the poet into the very heart of the "Rose Eternal," her final words are : —

"Behold how vast the circuit of our city !
Behold our seats so filled to overflowing,
That here henceforward are few people wanting ;"

the echo of an earlier vision : "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and

people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

The strong point in Dante is that he ingrafted into literature the purgatorial character of sin, — I do not say the dogma of Purgatory ; that went out with the flood of good and evil caused by the Reformation, and it was well enough that it should go, for both then and now it is a badly used doctrine, but it would be a mistake to lose the truth of it out of thought and life ; it would leave the moral world inexplicable. Whatever Protestant theology has done with this truth, Protestant literature has preserved it, and, next to love, made it the leading factor in its chief imaginative works. Sin and its reaction, pain eating away the sin, purity and wisdom through the suffering of sin, sin and its disclosure through conscience, — what else do we find in the great masterpieces of fiction and poetry, not indeed with slavish uniformity, but as a dominant thought ? Hawthorne wrote of little else ; it gives eternal freshness to his pages. It runs like a golden thread through the works of George Eliot and makes them other than they seem. The root idea of

this conception of sin is *humanity*, — the chief theme of modern literature as it is of Christianity ; and is the one because it is the other. This conception pervades literature because Christianity imparted it.

In Dante it was settled that henceforth Christianity should have literature for a mouthpiece. As the Renaissance and the Reformation prepared the field, — one bringing back learning and the other liberty, — Christianity began to vest itself in literary forms. The relation has continued, and has gained in strength from century to century. The same process has been going on in each, — a gradual elimination of Pagan ideas. The humanity and freedom of Christianity have their parallel in Literature, until in both they have become dominant factors. It is unnecessary to say which has been the fountain head of the common stream, which the master-light in all the clear seeing that marks modern thought. For the most part the literature of the Occident is Christian ; I mean the *great* literature ; but we must not expect to find all of Christianity in any one author. Working, spirit-like, its method has been that of searching out those gifted ones whose mental note re-

sponded to some note in itself, and set them to singing or speaking in that key. Thus it has worked, and we must look for Christianity in Literature not as though listening to one singer after another, but rather to the whole choir.

The range is wide and long. It reaches from Dante to Whittier ; from Shakespeare to Burns and Browning ; from Spenser to Longfellow and Lowell ; from Cowper to Shelley and Wordsworth and Tennyson ; from Milton to Newman and Matthew Arnold ; from Bunyan to Hawthorne and Tolstoi and Victor Hugo ; from Thomas à Kempis and Pascal to Kant and Lessing and Schleiermacher and Coleridge and Maurice and Kingsley and Bushnell ; from Jeremy Taylor and South and Barrow and the Cambridge Platonists to Emerson and Amiel and Carlyle ; from Bacon to Martineau ; from Addison and Johnson to Goethe and Scott and Thackeray and Dickens and George Eliot. Pardon the long but still scant list. Some great names cannot be included. As paganism lives on in the State, so it survives in literature, but in each with waning force. Still, even under a strict conception of Christianity, but few must be ex-

cluded. Nearly all strike some Christian note. It is not always clear ; often it fails to harmonize with much else in the author, and sometimes it is lost for a while, or is drowned in the discords of this world ; but Christianity is a wide thing, and nothing that is human is alien to it ; nor is it possible that any product of a single mind can more than hint at that which comprises the whole order and movement of the world. Christ is more than a Judean slain on Calvary ; Christ is humanity as it is evolving under the power and grace of God, and any book touched by the inspiration of this fact belongs to Christian literature. Take, for example, the Plays of Shakespeare ; there is hardly anything in them that is obviously Christian, — a few over-quoted references to Christ, no abuse of the Church, a decent English-like reverence, but no sense of Christianity either as a cause to be championed or as a prime factor in human life. Still they are Christian because they are so thoroughly on the side of humanity. How full of freedom ; what a sense of man as a responsible agent ; what conscience and truth and honor ; what charity and mercy and justice ; what reverence for man, and how well clothed is he in the

human virtues ; what a strong, hopeful spirit despite the agnostic note heard now and then, but amply redeemed and counteracted by the general tenor. If the predominant motive of Shakespeare were sought in his own lines it would be the couplet in Henry Fifth : —

“There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out ;” —

a sentiment one with the Christian estimate of this world and indicative of its process.

Something of the same sort might be said of Goethe. It would be a misfortune, indeed, if he could not be regarded as an interpreter of Christianity, — not because the Divine Order needs the help of such a name, but because it would seem as though Providence had defeated itself in so richly endowing a human mind and then suffering it to appear on the wrong side. When God opens the eyes of a man very wide, it is to be expected that he will not be blind to what is greatest. It is not a haphazard universe ; mind is correlated to fact ; great minds do not fail to take account of great realities.

Goethe is to be regarded as one in whom Christianity won a victory. Starting in a stout revolt against it, he ends in acquiescence. “It

is altogether strange to me," he wrote to Jacobi, "that I, an old heathen, should see the cross planted in my own ground, and hear Christ's blood and wounds practically preached without its offending me. We owe this to the higher point of view to which philosophy has raised us." As the years went on he wove more and more of this Christian philosophy into his pages, and if his doctrine of renunciation was not a total unclasping of the hand in its grasp upon the world, so that he never fully mastered the secret of the cross, he reached the threshold of the great truth and stood facing the altar.

But if his faith failed to reach the measure of his greatness, he rendered Christianity a weighty service by checking two harmful influences which, however corrective and within limits useful, were pressing unduly upon the Faith and even threatening its existence, — the infidelity of Voltaire and the naturalism of Rousseau. Both rendered a necessary service, — Voltaire in ending the reign of superstition, — as Carlyle has so well shown, — and Rousseau in breaking up an artificiality of thought and life that had nearly expunged nature. But each ran to the wildest extremes, —

one bringing up in blasphemy, and the other in the impulses of primitive nature and endless contradiction. In going back to nature Rousseau reversed evolution, which was a fundamental thought with Goethe before it had gained the attention of science. Goethe set his hard German sense and loftier inspiration against these influences, insisting on reverence, and asserting a doctrine of nature that embraced will and spirit, and made them the sources of conduct.

Goethe also rendered Christianity an inestimable service in destroying the mediæval conception of the world as a piece of mechanism, and of God as an "external world-architect," — conceptions that had come in through the Latin Theology, or rather had been fostered by it. Both Augustine and Calvin held the Divine Immanence, but it did not shut out a practical externalism in their systems. It may be truly said of Goethe that he introduced the modern spirit into theology, — chiefly, however, through protests and denials : —

"No ! such a God my worship may not win
Who lets the world about his finger spin
A thing extern : my God must rule within,
And whom I own for Father, God, Creator,
Hold nature in Himself, Himself in nature ;

And in his kindly arms embraced, the whole
Doth live and move by his pervading soul."

In the transfer of thought from the conception of God as a purely transcendent maker and ruler of the universe to such a conception as that contained in these lines, — a God also immanent and acting from within, — we have the starting-point of the theology which is now prevailing, and prevailing because it accords with other knowledge. As soon as theology is made a science, it must accord with other sciences, but whether a science or not, it must not contradict knowledge, nor alienate itself from the common thought of the world. The accepted discoveries of science in respect to the universe required a new conception of God, and it was Goethe's prophetic soul that led the way in this change, not, however, without the promptings of such a philosopher as Spinoza and his own intuitive perception of the laws of the natural world.

I have dwelt long upon Goethe, not because he is an interpreter of Christianity in literature, but because he illustrates the relation to Christianity of certain authors who are usually counted as doubtful, or as on the

wrong side of Faith. The Christian value of an author is not to be determined by the fullness of his Christian assertion. There is, of course, immense value in the positive, full-statured believers like Dante and Bacon and Milton and Browning. Such men form the court from which there is no appeal. But Christianity is all the while in need of two things: correction of its mistakes and perversions, and development in the direction of its universality. None can do these two things so well as those who are partially outsiders. An earnest skeptic is often the best man to find the obscured path of faith. Those who always lie "in Abraham's bosom" do not readily catch the tone of the eternal waters as they break on the shores of time. For many who doubt, there is no better author than Amiel, because he was himself a doubter who was always struggling after the truth, and such an one is often nearer than those who never probe it with questions.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

But if a doubter is often a good teacher and critic of Christianity, much more is it true that it is often developed and carried

along its proper lines not more by those who are within than by those who stand on the boundary and cover both sides. Milton, though a great teacher of Christian ethics in his prose writings, did nothing to enlarge the domain of Christian belief or to better theological thinking in an age when it sadly needed improvement, but Goethe taught Christianity to think scientifically, and prepared the way for it to include modern science. So of Shelley and Matthew Arnold and Emerson and the group of Germans represented by Lessing and Herder, — authors who, with their Hellenistic tendencies, represent a phase of thought and life which undoubtedly is to be brought within the unfolding scope of Christianity; and no one can do it so well as these modern Greeks. As kings of the earth they bring the glory and honor of their beauty and humanity and truth into the New Jerusalem which is always coming down from God out of heaven. In order to translate the natural into the divine, and to find a place for the divine in the natural, they who know the natural, and hold it even at some cost to the divine, must be employed.

No one better illustrates this point than Matthew Arnold. He has not a very lovely look with his Bishop-baiting and rough handling of Dissent, but, with all this, there is something worthier and broader in the man. Like others of his class, he calls attention to overborne or undeveloped truth. There is no doubt but the Church has relied too exclusively upon the miracles; Arnold reminds it that the substance of Christianity does not consist of them. It had come to worship the Bible as a fetich, and to fill it with all sorts of magical meanings and forced dogmas, — the false and nearly fatal fruit of the Reformation; — Arnold dealt the superstition a heavy blow that undoubtedly strained the faith of many, but it is with such violence that the kingdom of heaven is brought in. When God lets loose a thinker in the world there is always a good deal of destruction. Such teachers must be watched while they are listened to. We ourselves must be critics when we read a critic. He has a hard, unbelieving, and even unimaginative side, — useful in view of what he had to do, but he has another side that is tender and believing which carried his full inspiration. We picture him

as one who stood on the threshold of the temple looking to the altar, and even casting himself before it, — as in the lines on Rugby Chapel, — and interpreting the very law of the altar in “The Good Shepherd with the Kid;” — thus he stands upon the threshold looking within and believing, looking also without upon a world he could not understand.

In tracing our subject historically it is interesting to note a certain progress or order of development, especially in the poets, in the treatment of Christianity at the hands of Literature.

In Chaucer and Shakespeare we have a broad, ethical conception of it, free both from dogma and ecclesiasticism. The former mildly rebuked the evils and follies of the Church, but stood for the plain and simple virtues, and gave a picture of a parish minister which no modern conception has superseded. The latter denied nothing, asserted nothing concerning either Church or dogma, — keeping in the higher region of life, but it was life permeated with the humanity and freedom of Christianity. Spenser put its fundamental truths into allegories as subtle

as they are beautiful, but too fine and ethereal to lay hold of "this rough world." Milton more than half defeated his magnificent genius by weighting it with a mechanical theology. It is audacious work to question the moral value of "Paradise Lost." Such a masterpiece of literary art can hardly have been wrought in vain, and doubtless it has been the source and cause of much reverence and spiritual earnestness. Its very aim as an "Epic of Redemption" is not without effect, however poor the argument, but it did much to rivet the chains of a mechanical theology, and it made heaven and hell so material that the picture of them became literal fact and expectation to all who spoke English despite the assertion that "myself am hell." The greatest tribute to the genius of Milton is the fact that he supplanted the Bible in the minds of those who adored it. The Puritan for two hundred years died in the faith and expectation of Milton's heaven. It is in his prose writings that we find those ethical conceptions of Christianity which informed Puritanism and clothed its rugged strength with glory. Milton represents the force of the Puritan movement; it swept him off his feet, — a

thing that seldom happens to a poet. It captured him not only as a statesman, but as a poet, and so he sang its theology in verse unapproachably sublime, but without corresponding spiritual reality. In him is seen the anomaly of a great poet—and there is hardly a greater—who is without freedom, and yet worshiped freedom.

The later poets seldom make the same mistake; they rarely forego their birthright of spiritual vision. Cowper verged in the same direction, but saved himself by the humanity he wove into his verse,—a clear and almost new note in the world's music. But the poets who followed him, closing up the last of the eighteenth century and covering the first of the next, served Christianity chiefly by protesting against the theology in which it was ensnared. The service rendered to the Faith by such poets as Burns and Byron and Shelley is very great. It is no longer in order to apologize for lines which all wish had not been written. It were more in order to require apology from the theology that called out the satire of Burns, and from the ecclesiasticism that provoked the young Shelley even to atheism; the poet was not the real

atheist. We now see, that whether consciously or not, they were making necessary protests, breaking chains, opening paths, and clearing the way for a rational and humane faith, — Burns with sad, boisterous mirth, Byron with stormy rage and defiance, Shelley by turning all nature into a witness to the living spirit of Truth and Love, foolishly throwing away the form of Christianity, but casting himself with martyr-like devotion upon its spirit.

The alliance between Christianity and Literature which began soon after the Reformation has since flowed chiefly along Protestant lines. Literature has not much to say for the Faith when it shuts itself up in an ecclesiastical order ; it hardly rises higher than a Keble or a Faber. The poets will not sing except in subdued notes under rubrics and infallible edicts, and few will trouble themselves to write books on any subject that must submit to the “Index Expurgatorius.” Hence most of the poetry pertaining to the Roman Church is either sentimental or rhapsodical ; none of it has epic greatness or the seer-like quality ; and while the English poets have mostly been, like Wordsworth and Tennyson, children of the

Established Church, their poems are devoid of all Prelacy and even of prelatical reference. The Christian epics, the great reflective poems, and even the best hymns are the products of Protestantism, but in its largest and freest form.

It is noticeable that whenever any Christian literature appears in non-Protestant countries it is generally reactionary and overdrawn, or weakly unquestioning in its conformity to the Church ; it is not critical, nor broad, nor free. The contrast reaches to current literature. Scarcely any "books that are books" appear in English type but they are either heavily charged with Christian humanity and sentiment, or they debate some problem of faith or some question of morals. The novel of society and of naked realism, and the art-for-art's sake literature which lingering heathenism now and then strives to revive, have no deep and lasting regard ; but every author who seems to win a place and to keep it reflects how thoroughly Christianity and Literature interpenetrate each other. The permanent and classic seem to be that which is Christian ; and that which ignores Christianity and has escaped or missed its spirit, taking no pains even to ques-

tion or to deny, fails of that hearing which implies acceptance.

The time seems nearly to have come in which a Christian nation will accept and adopt as classic only the literature which is Christian. This is simply logical; it must embody those truths and facts which it has adopted as the grounds of its life and conduct. Its literature must represent what it believes in, what it cares for, and it must enshrine the hopes which inspire its daily life, and, above all, its literature must feed the ideals which it has caught from its Faith.

If, as was said at the outset, Christianity is a spirit that seeks to inform everything with which it comes in contact, the process has had clear and growing illustration in the poets of the last century. In one way or another — some in negative but more in positive ways — they have striven to enthrone love in man and for man as the supreme law, and they have found this law in God who works in righteousness for its fulfillment. The roll might be called from Wordsworth and Coleridge down to Longfellow, and but few would need to be counted out. Poetry, so far as it touches religion, is no longer sentimental, or demiurgic

as in Milton, but is speculative and philosophical. It grapples with the religious problems of the age, and debates them as do the theologians and social philosophers.

The marked examples are Tennyson and Browning, and of the two Tennyson is the clearer. Speaking roughly, and taking his work as a whole, it is more thoroughly informed with Christianity than that of any other master in literature. We do not, of course, refer to the *temper* of Christianity; that is better expressed elsewhere; nor do we mean that there are not authors who present some single phase of it in a clearer light. We do not forget the overwhelming positiveness of Browning, whose faith is the very evidence of things unseen, and whose hope is like a contagion. His logic is that of Job, — simple trust in a God who sustains an orderly universe: —

“The year ’s at the spring
And day ’s at the dawn ;
Morning ’s at seven ;
The hillside ’s dew-pearled ;
The lark ’s on the wing ;
The snail ’s on the thorn :
God ’s in his heaven —
All ’s right with the world ! ”

One would sooner spare almost any of

Tennyson's lines than these rough ones from Browning : —

“ My own hope is a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;
That after Last returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.”

It is this very positiveness that removes him a little way from us ; it is high and we cannot quite attain to it. Tennyson, on the contrary, speaks on the level of our finite hearts, believes and doubts with us, debates the problems of faith with us, and such victories as he wins are also ours. Browning leaves us behind as he storms his way into the heaven of his unclouded hope, but Tennyson stays with us in a world which, being such as it is, is never without a shadow. The more clearly we see the eternal, the more deeply are we enshrouded in the finite.

The most interesting fact in connection with our subject is the thorough discussion Christianity is now undergoing in literature ; and Tennyson is the undoubted leader in the debate. It is not only in the highest form of literary art, but it is based on the latest and fullest science. He turns evolution into faith, and makes it the ground of hope.

It is not in the "In Memoriam," however, but in the "Idylls" that we have his fullest explication of Christianity. It is fortunate that Milton did not carry out his purpose to use the Arthurian Legends. The poetry would have been fine enough, but one shudders to think what would have become of the stories after passing through the crucible of the Puritan theology. What they meant when first told on winter nights about the tables of mediæval barons is uncertain, for they always wore a mystic cast. But whatever they originally meant, they always contained the germ of the meaning that Tennyson put into them. It is thus that the spirit of Christianity works, — filling all the moulds of thought with itself, changing glimmerings of light into full sunshine. These "Idylls" are sermons or treatises; they deal with all sins, faults, graces, virtues, — character in all its phases and forms and processes put under a conception of Christ which twenty centuries have evolved, confirmed by the insight of the poet.

But while a profound interpreter, Tennyson refuses to play the part of prophet, and there is at the close of the "Passing of Arthur" that same half-faltering note heard throughout

“In Memoriam.” It is not the defect of faith nor the excess of doubt, but the insight of one who sees that this is an unfolding universe, that the future will not be like the past, and that mystery infolds it from first to last. His attitude is that of Job, who never gained the solution of life he longed for, but gained instead a trust in God, who, though he spoke out of the whirlwind of a tumultuous and contradictory world, yet showed order and purpose throughout it. Trust even with a shadow of doubt upon it is higher than belief. And so Tennyson brings the “Round Table which was an image of the mighty world” to an end. “New men, strange faces, other minds” are to come on.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

But Arthur will not so leave his last knight; the poet will not close up the present with ruin and open no way into the future. The past with its broken circle of knights, some following “wandering fires,” some hunting the Grail, — type of how much vain work in the name of God, — some treacherous, and all brought to nought in the “last, dim, weird

battle of the west" where Christian and heathen are fatally confused, and Arthur is mortally hurt while he slays false Modred with Excalibur, sword of the spirit; — not thus does the poet close the page of history. The striving world, the struggling soul, — interpret it as you will, — does not end its career on a field of "ever-shifting sand" so shrouded in "death-white mist" that "friend slew friend, not knowing whom he slew," and "ev'n on Arthur fell confusion:" — what a picture of the world as it fares on its uncertain way, — its doubtful battles, its shifting ground, its mistaken leadership, its disputes in the name of peace, its confusion of spirit and form, its conquests that yield no apparent gain, or a gain that only involves further strife! But not thus does the poet leave a too true picture of the world and of life. Modred is slain; the sword of the spirit does its work; falsehood is crushed. Some gain is made even when the battle is lost. Arthur, king of righteous and peaceful order, and lord of his own soul, must pass, but he does not pass to death. Humanity does not end its career on mist-shrouded battlefields, nor "on this bank and shoal of time." Arthur leaves as a link with the future

a weak but faithful warrior with the injunction to pray : —

“ More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.”

The battle is lost, as all battles seemingly are, for what is human life but a lost battle ? — but prayer remains ; the invisible world is still an open field. The battle is lost, but —

“ The whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

Life has no full victory, but it has trust in God. Arthur dies fighting, confused, but still knowing well how to discern a lie from the truth, and his soul passes, borne by Faith, Hope, and Love into its own eternal world. Explain life we cannot, nor can we forecast the history of the world, but we can trust both soul and world in the hands of God, leaving the mystery of existence with Him who is Being itself.

Such is the lesson taught by Tennyson. It was also taught by Job ; it was taught and lived out by Christ. Truth came to the Cross ; its victory is not a won battle, but a conflict for truth unto death. It is when literature explicates this central truth of Christianity that it reaches its own highest point of possi-

ble achievement ; for literature cannot surpass what is greatest and deepest in life.

It is in such poems as these that Christianity has succeeded in reëmbodiment itself in this last century.

The value of these restatements of Christianity, especially by the poets, is beyond estimate. They are the real defenders of the Faith, the prophets and priests whose succession never fails.

It is the poets who keep faith in the world. Christianity does not depend upon polemical defenders who often "dismiss the controversy bleeding," nor upon textual criticism and the consequent broader or narrower ground for faith, — in either case an empirical defense. It depends rather upon the vindication it secures in the master spirits of the world, and upon the forms in which they clothe their thought. Whatever happens to the text of Scripture, the truth as it comes from such souls will stand. The poets are unimpeachable ; they are truer than history, for they testify to what they have felt as well as seen. Christianity cannot be demonstrated, nor can it be overthrown by external attacks. It is revealed ; it comes through prophets who strug-

gle in the conflicts of life while their eyes are open to heaven.

To amend for a scanty treatment of our theme we will briefly enumerate the chief ways in which Literature becomes the interpreter of Christianity.

1. Literature interprets Christianity correctly for the plain reason that both are keyed to the spirit. The inspiration of high literature is that of truth; it reveals the nature and meaning of things, which is the office of the Spirit, that takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us, even as the poet interprets life, — two similar and sympathetic processes.

2. Literature, with few exceptions, stands squarely upon humanity and insists upon it on ethical grounds and for ethical ends; and this is essential Christianity.

3. Literature in its highest forms is unworldly. It is a protest against the worldly temper, the worldly motive, the worldly habit. It appeals to the spiritual and the invisible; it readily allies itself with all the greater Christian truths and hopes, and becomes their mouthpiece.

4. The greater literature is prophetic and

optimistic. Its keynote is, "All is well;" and it accords with the Christian secret: "Behold, I make all things new."

5. Literature, in its higher ranges, is the corrective of poor thinking, — that which is crude, extravagant, superstitious, hard, one-sided. This is especially true in the realm of theological thought. The theology of the West, with its passion for clearness and immediate effectiveness, is mechanical and prosaic; it pleases the ordinary mind, and, therefore, a democratic age insists on it; it is a good tool for priestcraft; it is easily defended by formal logic: but it does not satisfy the thinker, and it is abhorrent to the poet. Hence, thoroughly as it has swayed the Occidental world, it has never commanded the assent of its choicest minds. Hence the long line of mystics through whom lies the true continuity of Christian theology, always verging upon poetry and often reaching it. A theology that insists on a transcendent God who sits above the world and spins the thread of its affairs as a spinner at a wheel; that holds to such a conception of God because it involves the simplest of several perplexing propositions; that resents immanence as involving

pantheism ; that makes two catalogues, — the natural and the supernatural, — and puts everything it can understand into one list and everything it cannot understand into the other, and then makes faith turn upon accepting this division ; — such a theology does not command the assent of those minds who express themselves in literature ; the poet, the man of genius, the broad and universal thinker, pass it by ; they stand too near God to be deceived by such renderings of his truth. All the while, in every age, these children of light have made their protest ; and it is through them that the chief gains in theological thought have been secured.

For the most part the greater names in literature have been true to Christ, and it is the Christ in them that has corrected theology, redeeming it from dogmatism, and making it capable of belief, — not clear perhaps, but profound.

It may not be amiss to add to this paper a word of Benediction. Let it be drawn not from the Christian Scriptures, but from a page of modern literature that combines their inmost thought with truest form of literary

art, — each lending itself to the other in such a way as to show their ordained relation : —

“ ’Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his window seen
In Spitalfields, look’d thrice dispirited ;

“ I met a preacher there I knew, and said :
‘ Ill and o’erwork’d, how fare you in this scene ? ’
‘ Bravely ! ’ said he ; ‘ for I of late have been
Much cheer’d with thoughts of Christ, the living bread.’

“ O human soul, as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses’ ebb and flow,

“ To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou laborest through the night !
Thou mak’st the heaven thou hop’st indeed thy home.”

Matthew Arnold.

NOTES ON THE SCARLET LETTER

"Here in the soul's secret chambers are Fausts more subtle than Faust, Hamlets more mysterious than Hamlet, Lears more distracted and desolate than Lear; wills that do what they allow not, and what they would not do; wars in the members; bodies of death to be carried, as in Paul; wild horses of the mind, governed by no rein, as in Plato; subtleties of cunning, plausibilities of seeming virtues, memories writ in letters of fire, great thoughts heaving under the brimstone marl of revenges, pains of wrong and of sympathy with suffering wrong, aspirations that have lost courage, hates, loves, beautiful dreams, and tears; all these acting at cross purposes and representing, as it were to sight, the broken order of mind. Getting into the secret working, and seeing how the drama goes on in so many mystic parts, the wondrous life-scene takes on a look at once brilliant and pitiful and appalling, and what we call the person becomes a world of boundless capacities, shaken out of their law, energies in full conflict and without government, passions that are wild, sorrows that are weak."—HORACE BUSHNELL, *Building Eras*, p. 233.

"My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst."
BROWNING, *Apparent Failure*.

NOTES ON THE SCARLET LETTER

THE trouble with those who deny Shakespeare's authorship of the plays usually ascribed to him is that they cannot believe in a miracle. How can this great thing come out of Warwickshire, — a hundred miles away from London, — this son of a wool-comber, this truant deer-stealer who never saw Oxford, yet writing plays such as the world had not heard before nor has heard since? It was a miracle indeed, but of the kind that is all the while happening in a world that is greatly in need of what a miracle only can yield. For genius is a miracle; that is, it is inexplicable. Balzac, in the preface of "*Le Père Goriot*," says that "chance is the great romance-maker of the ages." It might be said that it also makes the romancers, for they appear as by chance, — unheralded and without apparent cause. Here is this boy Hawthorne, born in Salem a century ago, son of generations of shipmasters, not a touch of genius in ancestors or kindred, in a community absorbed in commercialism

and at that time singularly free from any flame at which genius could kindle its torch. At the age of fourteen he goes to Maine to reside with an uncle for a time; returns to Salem and prepares for Bowdoin College, where he has Longfellow as a classmate, and Franklin Pierce as a friend. He proves to be an indifferent scholar, and shows no signs of genius, unless it be an undue love of solitude and a brooding disposition that might argue either dullness or unusual intelligence. Genius has no clear signs. Nothing heralds it, and it has no true authentication until it does some work that stamps it as its own.

The authentication came late with Hawthorne. Three years after graduation in 1825, he published anonymously a short novel — “Fanshawe” — that had no sale, and was so slightly regarded by himself that he destroyed most of the first edition, with the result that not more than five copies are in existence. It had, however, the touch that is the peculiar charm of his later writings. For the next ten or twelve years he produced almost nothing, at least nothing commensurate with the long period of time and apparent leisure. Yet, he regarded literature as his vocation, and was

striving to live by his pen. He wrote a group of seven short stories which he burned, with how much wealth of genius in them we do not know. That they were rejected by seventeen publishers is no sign that they lacked this subtle quality. Nothing is so elusive and so shy of recognition as genius, for the simple reason that there is no rule by which it can be measured. The publishers have a little mathematical machine by which they can, in a moment, tell you how many printed pages will be required for your bulky pile of manuscript; but they have not yet found a machine that will measure or even detect the presence of that imponderable and unmeasurable thing called genius. The only approach to such a machine is some rare human being who happens (and here the miracle again comes in) to have a spark of it — latent or active — in his own composition. Doubtless these seven tales were full of the qualities that give priceless value to the few stories that are left. Nor is it strange that he did not himself detect the divine spark that glowed within them. Genius is like the eye which sees all things except itself. Hawthorne had a way of burning his productions whenever the hour of weakness

or self-distrust — such as often visits men of genius — came to him. Mr. James T. Fields told the writer — in the sixties — that Hawthorne, having got well into the “Scarlet Letter,” invited him to Salem to hear it read. Hawthorne was disposed to destroy it, and that might have been its fate had not Mr. Fields, who, better than any man of his day, knew a book when he saw one, interposed with a publisher’s authority, and so saved one which Mr. Woodberry — Hawthorne’s latest biographer — says is “a great and unique romance, standing apart by itself in fiction; there is nothing else quite like it.”

There is but little to tell of him biographically; and far less concerning his inner life; or, this would be the case were it not that a writer who deals chiefly with the human soul, and spreads it out in scores of characters, cannot fail also to reveal himself. He was shy to the last degree, and he early formed what he called “a cursed habit of solitude;” but the accuracy with which he uncovers the hidden working of the hearts of others becomes a mirror in which his own heart is pictured. At first, one is inclined to think him a cold, impassive writer, who holds the mirror up to

Nature, — himself simply steadying it while the artist looks through and declares what he sees. But a full reading somewhat alters one's opinion of him. It does not follow that the recluse is indifferent to humanity ; he may be simply less gregarious, or he has less need of others, or finds his best development in solitude, or is called to some task that requires a steady gaze at certain types of life without disturbing them with spoken words. It is easy to say that had Hawthorne's contact with the world been closer, and had he been reared in a richer and more complex society, his writings would have been less sombre and more varied in their themes. Mr. Henry James — his severest critic while a great admirer — grants that the simplicity of his life was in his favor ; "it helped him to appear complete and homogeneous." But when Mr. James seems to limit him by declaring that he is "intensely and vividly local," one pauses to ask if local color hinders universality of treatment. He had the independence and originality of his own genius, but he found his subjects in New England. His chief theme was the play of conscience under a sense of sin and guilt. Now, nothing is truer than that this theme

had wide illustration in New England, and especially in its theology, where it was an organic factor. The reality of sin ; its destructive effect on character ; its doomlike aspect ; the horrible certainty of its result ; the impossibility of escape from it except by a special and personal decree of God ; the haunting misery of it, fed by uncertainty as to escape ; the tragedy that not seldom sprang out of it in every community, — all this was familiar to Hawthorne ; but it is a singular fact that, while treating the generic truth, he never seriously touches the prevalent theological aspects of it. It is not the sin, nor the guilt, nor the reprobation of the New England theology exclusively that yields him his themes. Had he established a closer relation to it in his plots, he might almost have been claimed as an adherent or a critic of it. But he cannot be located in that region of thought. Neither sin, nor guilt, nor remorse, belongs exclusively to the Puritan, nor to any theology, though wrought into all. They belong to humanity as parts of its universal problem, and it is as such that Hawthorne treated them. Thus he escaped the charge of provincialism. It is no derogation to admit that

he was, in one sense, provincial, — like Burns and Scott, — but his genius was adequate to his standing in the broad field of universal humanity in company with the great masters of it.

Why did Hawthorne choose this one theme, — sin and its consequences, — hardly putting pen to paper except to set down something bearing on it? He was not what is usually termed a religious man; that note was not fully accentuated in him; though what depths of spiritual feeling were hidden in that never-revealed heart let no man attempt to measure. Nor did he take an interest in the theological debates that clustered about sin. Orthodox and Unitarian were one or nothing with him; their contentions will pass, his remain as new and as old as humanity. He took no interest in reforms, and held himself aloof from every practical question of social life and activity except when forced to it by the necessity of a livelihood, — for until he was forty-six chill penury was his lot. Why, then, did he choose sin as his theme? For the same reason that the great masters in literature always gravitate to it. The Hebrews put it into the first pages of their sacred books. Job

chose it, and set a pace often followed but not yet overtaken. The Greeks built their drama upon it. Shakespeare and Goethe could not justify their genius except as over and over again they dealt with it. Dante put it under heaven and hell and all between. Milton could find no theme adequate to his genius but "man's first disobedience." Shall we say, then, that a great genius makes sin his theme because it suits his purpose as an artist? Let us not so belie him. He takes it because it is the greatest theme, and also because it falls in either with his convictions as in the case of Milton, or with his temperament as in the case of Hawthorne. And why is it great? Because it is a violation of the order of the world, and is the defeat of humanity. It throws human nature wide open to our gaze; we look on the ruin, and see man's greatness; on his misery, and so uncover pity, which becomes a redeeming force. Thus it opens the whole wide play of human life in its highest and deepest relations. Nothing so interests men as their sins and defeats. Tragedy is born of them, and tragedy fixes evermore the steady gaze of mankind. Genius is its own interpreter; it makes few mistakes.

Hawthorne wrote four novels and seven or eight short stories, all turning on sin, and he never errs in its analysis, its operation, or its effect, though he stops short of finality. His characters are infallibly true to themselves. He is always logical. The environment suits the case down to slightest details. Nature conforms to the tragedy, either illuminating or darkening the play as it goes on, but always with rigid fidelity. His entire work is bathed in truth. Never does he weaken its absoluteness by introducing his personal belief, though occasionally, in his "Note-Books," he gives us a glimpse of himself, like this: "When I write anything that I know or suspect to be morbid, I feel as though I had told a lie."

He has no theory of his own; it is the same old story: eating forbidden fruit; hiding from God; losing Paradise; tempted of woman; tempted of Satan; tempted of Mammon; sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption; a deceived heart feeding on ashes; death the wages of sin,—and no clear glimpse of a way out. If stated in modern phrase, it would be this: whatever a man does, he does to himself. There is no pro-

founder truth in morals or religion or life than this. The Puritan theology obscured it in its doctrine of sin and of redemption. Both were weakened by over-localization outside of the man himself — putting sin in the progenitor of the race, and redemption into imputation and an expiatory process. However uncertainly these doctrines are held to-day, they still cast a blinding shadow upon ethics, and make it difficult to persuade men that whatsoever they sow they shall reap.

It is enough to say of Hawthorne, at this point, that nowhere in literature is this truth taught more clearly, — with such freedom from the alloy of dogmatic obscuration, with such absence of personal prejudice, — one might almost say of feeling, — with such solemnity, such tragic force and poetic beauty, and, above all, such closeness to life, as are to be found in these four novels and the stories.

We will take a closer look at the greatest of them. What shall be said of the “Scarlet Letter;” where shall it be located in the realm of Literature? It is not a love story, nor a romance, nor an allegory, nor a parable, nor a historical novel, though it has something of

each. It comes near being a dogma set in terms of real life, and made vivid by intense action; but Hawthorne cared nothing for dogma of any sort. What, then, shall it be called? It must go without classification. It is a study of a certain form of sin made graphic by conditions best calculated to intensify each feature. Mrs. Hawthorne said that during the six months he was writing it his forehead wore a knot. So will the reader's, if he reads as carefully as Hawthorne wrote.

It was published in 1850, when Hawthorne was forty-six years of age. It has, first of all, this distinction: it is—as Mr. James says—“the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in the country.” In the half-century since, a true and full American literature has been produced: authors of high merit have secured a lasting place; and others of less merit have given us works of fiction that sell almost by the million, but none that are worthy to stand by the side of this short story of sin and shame and remorse. What is claimed for it in this country is freely accorded abroad, though, of course, no comparisons are made with the long annals of English literature, where there are names that

defy comparison. It is, however, read more widely there than here, and is held in steadier estimate than we accord, who read as gregariously as sheep crop the grass. We simply state the consensus in which it is held in our American world of letters when we say that it is the most consummate work in literature yet produced in this country.

The explanation of the permanent high estimate of the "Scarlet Letter" — for it would be as safe to wager on it as on the Bank of England — is the absolute perfection of its art and corresponding subtilty and correctness of thought, and, not least, a style that both fascinates and commands. If it is criticised on slight points, — as that it has too much symbolism, that the story is mixed with parable, and the like, — we grant or deny as we see fit; but we brush all this aside, we turn to the book again and close it with a sigh, or something deeper than a sigh, — even thought, — and pronounce it perfect.

It is a simple story, told of a simple age, Greek in its severity, having only four characters: a wife forgetful of her vows; a clergyman forgetful of more than his vows; a wronged husband, left in England, but brought

forward ; a little child, — these and no more, save the people, individually unimportant, but necessary to form a background for the tragedy. Boston is not yet half a century old, Puritan to the core, hot still with a hatred of the tyranny and sin it had crossed the ocean to escape, governed by the letter of Scripture wherein was found the command that an adulteress should die. But some mercy had begun to qualify the Hebrew code, and instead of death or branding with a hot iron, Hester Prynne was condemned to stand upon the pillory-platform, wearing upon her breast the letter A wrought in scarlet, not only then, but ever after. With her babe in her arms she faces the people, and sees her husband among them, — an old and learned man, — who unexpectedly appears and takes his place as an avenger. The real history of the tragedy begins when the young minister, Mr. Dimmesdale, is required by the magistrate to appeal to Hester to reveal the partner of her guilt. Dimmesdale is at no time in the story represented as wholly contemptible. However sinful his characters may be, Hawthorne always clothes them with a certain human dignity. From the first he is the victim of his

sin, — suffering the tortures of remorse to a degree impossible to Hester, because to the first sin he added that of concealment and hypocrisy by continuing in his holy office; and, heavier than all, was the sense that he was dragging the cause, in both Church and State, for which the colony was founded, down to the level of his own degradation. It was not for this that Hester, when adjured by him, refused to make the declaration for which he called, but for love only. The story, at the outset, is lifted out of all carnality. Shame and remorse have burned up that dross, until in time only the capacity to suffer is left, while in her heart love remains, — pure always, and made purer by acquiescence in her punishment and the discipline of motherhood. The story moves on, most human, but inexorable as fate. The scarlet letter on Hester's breast almost ceases to do its office. A sense of desert and undying love and pity make her shame endurable. But Dimmesdale finds no relief. The scarlet letter burns itself into his flesh, and he dies in late confession for love, if not for his soul.

It would be difficult to find elsewhere so close an analysis of the play of the soul in

the supreme moments of life as that of the leading characters, — all brought to the logical conclusion of their history. The blending of spiritual insight and literary art forms one of those triumphs the like of which one may look for in vain until one reaches the great masters in drama. It also suggests a problem in theology that has vexed the souls of men from the beginning, and will continue to vex them so long as sin and conscience stand opposed to each other. The problem is that of forgiveness: is it ever fully won? The plot goes no farther than their contrasted destiny. The curtain drops when the chief actor dies. If here and there it is lifted for a moment, or swept aside by some gust of irrepressible grief, it springs from hope, not from the main purpose. It is in Hester that riddance from sin comes nearest a possibility. Her acceptance and patient endurance of her penalty, without suffering it wholly to break her heart or her will, become a natural and real atonement that yields, if not peace, something of more value. The current of her life ran on in its natural channel in the light of day, before the eyes of the people. The contrast at the last between her strength and

his weakness was not between a strong woman and a weak man, — each such by nature, — but between them as each came to be under the discipline of the seven years of experience so differently borne. Dimmesdale was not originally a weak man; had he been, the story would have lost point and emphasis, and would have sunk to the level of a vulgar scandal of every-day life. Hawthorne quickly lifts the narrative out of that region, and confines it to the world where only moral and spiritual forces fill the stage. But under the concealment of his sin Dimmesdale gave way at every point; all the sources of his strength were dried up by the hypocrisy in which he had wrapped himself, and he grew steadily weaker, while Hester gained a certain robustness of will without loss of her love. Hawthorne here comes very near preaching. Indeed, he seldom does anything else; it is the function of genius to preach. Give him a text, put on him the Geneva gown, and you have a preacher of universal orthodoxy fulfilling his calling with awful veracity.

But Hawthorne will not allow the tragedy to sink into the hopelessness of reprobation, — not that he cared for the doctrine one way

or the other, but, as an interpreter of evil and as a literary artist, he could not leave Dimmesdale absolutely where his sin placed him; for, in one character, he saw that evil, simply because it is evil, is a mystery, and as an artist he could not map out human passion in mathematical lines. It had stripped Dimmesdale of all that was best, obscured his judgment, defeated his love, blinded him to the distinction between good and evil, overthrown his will, involved his body in the sin of his soul, and brought him to the verge of death; but something is left that revives as soon as he clasps the hand of his child, and—leaning on Hester—he mounts the scaffold where she at first had stood alone and taken on herself the punishment he should have shared with her. Under his decision to confess he revives, and begins to move aright. The scene changes. Each character is transformed. Confession begins to do its work. A far step is taken in the next word: “‘Is not this better,’ murmured he, ‘than what we dreamed of in the forest?’” — meaning flight together, at Hester’s suggestion, for his sake. Here he regains something of himself; better to die a true man than to flee a false one. Hester

can see the matter in but one light. She had slowly worked out a conscious redemption through "shame, despair, and solitude." She had not sunk to his depth, and she could not rise to the height to which confession was lifting him. She cannot escape the constraint of her love and pity. She had freed herself; she thought she could free him. "'I know not,' she replied. 'Better? yea: so we may both die, and little Pearl die with us!'" In Hester the passion of love dominates; let it be death if we can die together; but in him the passion of a soul achieving deliverance from sin in the only possible way is stronger, and he is ready to die even if it be alone. He exults in the confession he is about to make before the people. It is the fifty-first Psalm over again. Had Hawthorne read St. Augustine? Or was it the insight of genius brooding in long silence on the way of a guilty soul emerging from the hell of measureless sin? Nowhere does Hawthorne rise so high in tragic skill and power as in the confession that follows when Dimmesdale uncovers his breast and shows burnt into his flesh the letter Hester had worn openly upon her bosom. Here are the stigmata of the early saints,

brought out by sin instead of by self-absorption in the crucified One. The final and only atonement is made, and he sinks upon the scaffold to die. Forgiving his tormentor whom he had wronged, he turns to his child, where the tragedy completes itself.

Pearl is the one consummate flower of Hawthorne's genius, — unsurpassed by himself and absolutely original. There is woven into her the entire history of these two suffering but diverse souls, which she must fulfill and yet preserve her perfect childhood. She sets forth the sin of her parents without a trace of its guilt, yet reflects the moral chaos in which it had involved her. This is done with matchless art: — “an elf child,” the people called her, passing from one mood to another as though a double nature, an Undine as yet without soul, but restless because it is withheld; or, as Mr. Dimmesdale himself had described her, having no “discoverable principle of being save the freedom of a broken law;” and there is added a far-reaching word: “whether capable of good, I know not.” Hawthorne does not here hint at inheritance of natural disposition, but has in mind a possible transmission of the confusion springing out of a violation

of the moral order. It was not a dream of human love that passed into her being, but something stronger than love.

His thought here runs very deep. This child of guilty passion inherited not the passion, but a protesting conscience that always put her at odds with herself. As Chillingworth was the malignant conscience that destroyed Dimmesdale, Pearl was the natural conscience that wholesomely chastened her mother so long as the inevitable penalty lasted. This ministration is strikingly brought out in the profoundest chapter of the book, where Hester's inner life is disclosed. One is tempted, as one follows it, to ask if Hawthorne suffered his own thoughts to wander into the region where the question of woman's place and rights in human society was undergoing heated discussion. The din of it filled his ears unless he closed them, as he usually did when anything like reform met them. But in this tender and sympathetic chapter he tells where Hester's thoughts often led her, and where she surely would have followed them had she been free to fulfill her dreams. It certainly was where his thoughts would not have gone. But as in Tennyson's "Princess" a child solved the prob-

lem, so here Pearl and motherhood dispelled her dreams and kept her within the lines of natural duty. In every case Pearl dominates the situation, whether she be regarded as a symbolized conscience or as a child. The story throughout is a drama of the spirit; the real and the spiritual play back and forth with something more than metaphor, for each is both real and spiritual. She is woven with endless symbolism into every page; from the first wail in the prison where she was born, the child sets the keynote and keeps it to the end. The brook in the forest ran through black shadows and through sunshine, and babbled in two voices. “‘What does this sad little brook say, mother?’ inquired she. ‘If thou hadst a sorrow of thine own, the brook might tell thee of it, even as it is telling me of mine.’” Here is a sermon in running brooks deeper than the Duke heard,—the response of nature to the inner spirit of man.

But this contradiction that ran through the child passes away as soon as the purpose of confession enters the heart of Dimmesdale, whom before she had shunned so long as he and her mother talked of flight. As the two meet upon the scaffold after treading their

bitter but diverse paths, and become spiritually one through this confession, the child mingles her life with theirs through the truth that now invests them, and proves that "she has a heart by breaking it." Here we have the purest idealism, Greek in the delicacy of its allusions, and Hebrew in its ethical sincerity. What Hawthorne has in mind all along is that a sin involving hypocrisy can in no way be undone or gotten over except by confession, and so getting back into the truth. Dramatic art requires that it shall involve all the actors, — Chillingworth as well as Hester. Though a wronged husband, he was fiendish in his revenge, and as false as Dimmesdale. Any other writer of romance would have hurled him to a doom of fire or flood. But Hawthorne has other uses for him. He is the malignant conscience of Dimmesdale, as Pearl is the beneficent conscience of Hester. All the *dramatis personæ* must be subdued into the likeness of the common motive; and so Hawthorne places Chillingworth on the scaffold, where the mingled atmosphere of unconquerable love and repentance enfolds him. He calls it a defeat; "thou hast escaped me," he said to Dimmesdale; but it was more than

defeat. Hawthorne leaves room for the thought at least that something of good found its way into his poor soul and stayed there.

We must acquit Hawthorne here, and on every other page of his works, from aiming at mere effect, but we cannot fail to see that in this last scene he comes near losing himself and letting his pity carry him beyond the point where the logic of his story left Dimmesdale; for to have wholly absolved him from his sin would have carried the writer beyond his purpose to unfold the working of broken law,—a thing not to be tampered with by an over-sympathetic pen. Hawthorne was neither a skeptic, nor a pessimist, nor a cold-hearted man; he was widely the reverse of each. It was the intensity of his faith in the moral laws and in the reality of goodness, and the delicacy and strength of his sympathy, that made him capable of writing in an un-failing strain of justice tempered, but not set aside, by pity.

But behind these qualities was the artistic sense, which—in a great man—is one with his power and insight, and he could write only what he saw and knew; for art is authoritative. Tennyson was once asked why he did

not give "In Memoriam" a happier ending, — a Paradiso with its vision of God instead of a great hope only. He replied, "I have written what I have felt and known, and I will never write anything else." Hawthorne could say the same of himself; and we might add that his sense of art, as well as his sense of truth, held him in leash. His reserve, however temperamental, is a sign of his consummate skill as a literary artist. On what page, in what sentence, does he fall short? The reader turns over the last page and feverishly demands the next scene in the tragedy, but finds only hints or nothing at all; the characters sink back into the mystery from which they emerged. They move like spirits in a world unreal except as their truth makes it real. Hence their intangibleness; they haunt one in the guise of the quality they set forth, but beyond that they do not exist. They stand for no person, but only for some law — kept or broken — which they symbolize. There is no Dimmesdale, nor Hester, nor Pearl, nor Chillingworth, but only shadows of broken law working out its consequences in ways of penalty wrought into the Eternal Order. They stay but a moment, and — like a faded

pageant — disappear ; but while they stay, the deepest meanings of life are set before us in forms of transcendent power, and become permanent in ourselves.

This ready impartation of ideas is everywhere a marked feature of Hawthorne's works, due to the absolute sincerity of their ethical elements, their perfection of literary form and their pervasive humanity. To doubt the last factor is to rob his genius of its main-spring. The severity of his treatment grows out of the accuracy of his logic. He deals with mystery and, therefore, says little, only enough to show that whatever a man does he does to himself ; that obedience is light, and disobedience is darkness in which, because nothing can be seen, there is nothing to be said.

Still, Hawthorne does not hold it to be contrary to his opinions or his art to suffer gleams of hope to illumine even the darkest of his pages. With a masterly touch at the very beginning of the "Scarlet Letter," he expressly states this to be a feature of the story he is about to tell. He puts by the door of the prison, where Hester was confined, "a wild rosebush," and says, "it may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral

blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow." Therefore, in the last scene there are almost forecasts of a good outcome. In the child the spell that drove her apart from her father is broken, and with tears she kisses his dying lips. Hester raises the unconquerable question of love: "' Shall we not spend our immortal life together? Thou lookest far into eternity with those bright dying eyes! Then tell me what thou seest?'" Hester was mistaken. Her cleansed eyes could see, but his could not with any certainty; he had lived in the dark too long for clear vision. And yet Hawthorne will not hide the end behind so dark a pall. The rose at the prison door blossoms into a hope. The moralizing of the great master is not forgotten: "There is some soul of goodness in things evil." Dimmesdale remembers that there is recovery through suffering, and that it is a sign of mercy. Having set his ignominy before the people, his death becomes triumphant, and he departs with words of praise and submission. Still, Hawthorne will neither assert nor deny, but leaves each to read the story in his own way.

It is not well to look for a doctrine in this masterly and carefully balanced picture. Hawthorne did not intend one; he drew from a broader field than that of dogma. One may hope where one cannot well believe. Belief is special; hope is universal. Dimmesdale stated his own case correctly, — a confused and conflicting statement, because having long lived a lie its bewildering confusion impregnated all his thought. In Hester life has done its worst and its best, and, brooded over continually by truth, she emerges clear-eyed, and sees — shall we say heaven or hell? — She cared not, so long as she could be with him. One is here reminded of Dante's Francesca in the "Inferno," "swept about the never resting blast" of hell with Paolo, — her only consolation being that they would never be separated. Mr. Dinsmore, who calls attention to this resemblance in his able book, the "Teachings of Dante," thinks that Hawthorne — not having then learned Italian — came to it alone. It may well be so, for it is the quality of love to transcend all motives beside its own; and not seldom does it cast itself with loss of all that it has in time or eternity, for so it chooses, rather than give up itself, — not voluptuous

love, but that spiritual passion which makes of two souls one. They have no life if they are separated. Such was Hester's love. Penance had not weakened, but rather had refined it, until its spiritual essence only was left with its commanding power. This Hawthorne sees by the light of his own genius. But to unwind the thread of human fault, and hold it up so that it shall shine in a brighter color, is a task that he hints at, but does not attempt.

Still, he touches sin with a firm hand, and traces it without flinching to the point where it culminates, — always the same ; it separates man from God and his fellows, and at last from himself ; it returns in retribution, and the evil he has done to others he does to himself. A casual reading may set this down as a Puritan dogma. It is Puritan, but it is universal before it is Puritan. Hawthorne in his greater works touched nothing that was only and distinctively Puritan. His characters wear the garb, but underneath is simply the human soul. This distinction is to be made because it helps to a right understanding of the book, and redeems both it and its author from the charge of provincialism, — a derogation not to be made concerning a genius whose province

lay among themes as broad and universal as human nature.

Hawthorne put no unmeaning words into the "Scarlet Letter," and the question may arise how far he intended to include Chillingworth in the scene of redemption on the scaffold, — for such it may be called. The answer must be found in Chillingworth's exclamation: "Thou hast defeated me!" Why did he say that? Because Dimmesdale had taken himself out of the world of lies, and put himself into the hands of the God of truth, and thus brought not only himself, but all about him, under the redeeming influences that filled the air, for even the people went home, as it were, smiting their breasts. If the story be a parable, the harassing conscience must be set at rest; it is defeated, and Chillingworth no longer has a vocation. Dimmesdale had done what he had advised him to do: "Wouldst thou have me to believe, O wise and pious friend, that a false show can be better — can be more for God's glory, or man's welfare — than God's own truth?" His advice, given in answer to Dimmesdale's specious paltering with an eternal reality, deepened his victim's agony and so fed his revenge; but when acted on, his

patient passed beyond his reach. He had gone deeper than he knew, and had brought to the surface a spiritual power that outmastered his own. Shall we say that Hawthorne did not intend to hint that Chillingworth came under this greater power, and that, finding himself a defeated man through his own suggestion, he felt its divineness? He utters no word of malice, no confident boast, no plan of further revenge. Instead, what else is seen of him is beneficent, and in accord with a nature originally sound and high-minded. Along with others, he has been involved in a furious storm of human passion, but it passes by when truth wins the victory. Hawthorne, like the consummate artist that he is, never asserts or paints in full, but only intimates and leaves the rest to the reader; and so we may believe that the tragedy pauses at the door of Chillingworth. At the close Hawthorne plays uncertainly and with jest over this strange yet natural character. Chillingworth is reduced to nothingness and withers away,—a logical end, but he reappears in a new light as enriching Hester and Pearl,—a strange thing to do unless some goodness is left in him. Then the author jests and sends him literally to the devil, where “he

would find tasks enough " and receive " his wages duly." If Hawthorne ever falters it is when he plays between the Parable and the Romance. Here he drops the former, and ends his story — in Walter Scott fashion — with a word for each. Evidently he writes with a weary pen, yet not with an unpitiful heart. In the next sentence he would fain be merciful to "all these shadowy beings, so long our near acquaintances, — as well Roger Chillingworth as his companions;" and finally, after a bit of psychological byplay, by no means serious, — on the possible identity at bottom of hatred and love, — raises the question whether the old physician and the minister may not find "their earthly stock of hatred and antipathy transmitted into golden love." Thus, though the "Scarlet Letter" is a sad book, the author would not leave it black with hopeless sorrow. Even as an artist Hawthorne knew better than to paint his canvas in sober colors only; and as a man he had no right to bruise the human heart with needless pain. Sad as the "Scarlet Letter" is, we need not think him forgetful of Madame Necker's saying that "the novel should paint a possible better world." But if better, it can be

such only through truth and never through lies.

What renders the "Scarlet Letter" one of the greatest of books is the sleuthhound thoroughness with which sin is traced up and down and into every corner of the heart and life, and even into nature, where it transforms all things. Shakespeare paints with a larger brush, and sets it in great tragic happenings; but its windings, the subtle infusion of itself into every faculty and impressing itself upon outward things, are left for Hawthorne's unapproachable skill. This leads us to speak of the criticism of Mr. Henry James upon the twelfth chapter, where the story reaches its climax. Dimmesdale and Hester and Pearl stand at night upon the scaffold, where Hester had stood alone with her babe seven years before. His remorse had reached its lowest depth; its sting lay in the fact that she wore the scarlet letter while he went clad in robes of unquestioned sanctity. It is the letter that torments him, and carries the guilt and shame of the whole bitter history. He has come into a condition where, because he can think of nothing else, he can see nothing else. A

meteor flashes across the black sky and paints upon a cloud the fatal letter. A page of magnificent writing describes the objective picture and the heart within which only it exists. Mr. James regards it as overworked, and, along with a general charge of the same overdoing here and there, intimates that the author "is in danger of crossing the line that separates the sublime from its intimate neighbor." That Hawthorne should be termed ridiculous after being described as "a thin New Englander with a miasmatic conscience" should occasion no surprise. It shows how wide apart are the realist and the idealist; and also how much nearer the idealist comes to the facts of the case in hand.

That Dimmesdale should transfer what he saw and felt within to the external world is a well-known psychological possibility; and we appeal from the realist to his brother the psychologist, who says in his recent book that "it is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the sub-conscious region to take on objective appearances." It is needless to say that literature, from the Bible down, abounds in this transfer of inward feeling to outward form. When Balaam had sold his prophetic

gift for a price, it was not the ass that rebuked him, but his own smiting conscience. It was not the witches, but Macbeth, who sang, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," — after which all things were inverted: his thoughts became ghosts and daggers and a knocking at the gate like thunders of doom. Lady Macbeth can see nothing but blood on her white hands. Beckford in his "Vathek" (where possibly Hawthorne found the suggestion of Dimmesdale's habit of placing his hand upon his heart) made the dwellers in the Hall of Eblis happy in all things except that each held his hand over his heart, which had become "a receptacle of eternal fire." Mr. James seems to underestimate the mental condition into which Dimmesdale has fallen; he strikes the key of the tragedy too low, and refers what he regards as excessive to Hawthorne's Puritanism. Now, Puritanism is a capacious thing, but it cannot hold all that is cast into it; and much is set down to its credit that belongs to a false conception of it. Mr. James, in his able biography, insists on two things, to which we have already referred, as explanatory of Hawthorne: that he was provincial, and that he was largely influenced

by his Puritan blood. Each is to be taken with due allowance. Of course, every man, however great his genius, strikes his roots down into native soil and draws his life from such air as is about him. Something of root and air will enter into his mental composition, and in some measure he will think with or from his environment, and his heart will throb with ancestral blood. But it is a quality of genius that it is not subject to such limitations. Genius belongs to the domain of nature; it is cosmic, spiritual, universal. It treats these limitations in one of three ways: it lifts them into their ideals; it transcends them; or it extracts their thin essence or spirit. The last may be said of Hawthorne. Little of Puritanism remained in him except its spirituality, by which we mean its profound sense of the reality of moral law. Much that is set down to him as Puritan was a family idiosyncrasy, — an individualism that passed all the bounds of early or later Puritanism. It favored, however, the play of his genius in its chosen field.

To regard him as provincial because Salem was provincial, or because habits were simple in Massachusetts in the first half of the cen-

ture, is to miss the source of his strongest quality. Hawthorne, by virtue of his brooding solitude and the lofty character of his thought, which was rooted in his own peculiar genius and was fed by an imagination that had no need to go outside of itself for ideas or theories, was shut off from provincialism save perhaps in some matters of personal habit. The nearest sign of it was an intense love of New England and indifference to the mother country where he had lived for years, — an unweaned child of his native land. There is more in him that offsets Puritanism than identifies him with it. In fact, it outdid itself, as has continually happened, and created in Hawthorne an individualism that separated him from itself. A system whose central principle is individualism cannot count upon holding together its own adherents. It is by its own nature centrifugal, though none the worse for that; it makes man a denizen of the heavens rather than of this mundane sphere. But the way is long, and at great cost is it trod.

It is Hawthorne's peculiarity that he cannot be identified with any school of thought. He

was a recluse down to the last fibre. He did not hate men, but he would not mingle with them. He was shy, but in a lofty way. Any real alliance in thought or action with others was impossible to him. His individualism was absolute, but it was temperamental. Socially he was closely identified with the transcendental way of thinking, but it found no access to his mind. He and Emerson were neighbors, but not intimates. When they walked together in Concord they discussed the weather and the crops, but not philosophy, nor religion, nor politics. Oftener they were silent, as great men, who know each other as such, can afford to be. Tennyson and Carlyle once sat together of an evening for three hours, smoking, and neither uttering a word, except Carlyle's good-night: "Come again, Alfred; we have had a grand time." This aloofness from men, and at the same time this power of dragging to light the hidden secrets of their souls, is the inexplicable gift of genius; it has an eye of its own; one glance and it looks the man through and through. He mingled frequently with the North Adams frequenters of the village tavern, but he was off on the mountain-side,

among the lime kilns, weaving the threads of Ethan Brand. He spent a year at Brook Farm, but spoke lightly of its socialism and of his own part as "chambermaid to the oxen," — a wasted year, but it gave us the "Blithedale Romance," which Mr. James places at the head of his works. He hated Socialism, but Puritanism, its opposite, — being spiritual and social individualism, — won in him no following save as it furnished him standing ground and materials for his work. Had he lived anywhere where conscience and law had full recognition and sin was possible, he would have written in the same strain, — as in the "Marble Faun," where Donatello serves his purpose as well as Dimmesdale. The crime and its effect in each belong to the general field of ethics, where sin reveals its nature in soul experiences that are common to all men. Indeed, he has but one deep and permanent interest: the play of conscience under sin. He is a student of the soul. He watches its play as a biologist watches an animal under varying conditions; but in each case it is the study of a soul, — not degraded, but only wounded, as it were, and while it is keen to feel, and while the good and evil in it are full of primal energy.

It is sometimes said, in halfway derogation of Hawthorne's genius, that his tales are parables. Why should they not be so regarded? It is not easy to escape the parable, in literature or in life. What are the world and humanity but parables of the Eternal Mind? The only question in literature is, are the parables well told? If they are, the witness of a vast company of great authors in all ages and tongues is theirs. Hawthorne was full of dreams, fantasies, symbols, and all manner of spiritual necromancy, — turning nature into spirit and spirit back into nature, but — however wild the play of his imagination — the idea underlying it always has three characteristics: it is real, and true, and moral. Hence, the "Scarlet Letter," — devoid of history and of probability; illusive; nature transformed to create and to receive meanings; personality sunk in ideas and ideas made personal; so far away that our hearts do not reach it with sympathy, and it is read with unwet eyes, but with thoughts that lie too deep for tears; — still it is one of the truest and most moral of books, because the human soul that lies behind it and plays through it is true to itself whether it does good or evil. Hawthorne

knew evil under its laws. Neither sentiment, nor art, nor dogma deflected him from seeing the thing as it is, and setting it down with relentless accuracy. His claim to genius would be impeached if it were not accurate ; and the reason why it stands clear and unquestioned is because no taint of morbidness nor Puritan inheritance lessens the absolute veracity of his estimates. Each may have had something to do with the selection of his subjects, but nothing whatever with his own ethical opinions. His literary art and execution, faultless as they are, would not alone secure for him the admiration and reverence of all lovers of good literature. For, at last, it is truth alone for which men care ; and truth only is strong enough to win unquestioned and universal verdicts.

And yet he is criticised on the score that the "Scarlet Letter," especially, is sad, and sometimes it is added that it is pessimistic. So are "Lear" and Balzac's "Alkahest" sad, but neither deserves the latter term. Nothing in literature is pessimistic that accurately describes a violation of the order of the world and of human life, if it be in the interest of truth and justice. Dimmesdale and Hester

could not escape the pangs they suffered; they were not going through their parts in a world of pessimism, but in a world of order which they had violated, and for which they were undergoing inevitable yet redemptive penalty. There is no pessimism so long as the just laws of society are working normally, — the very point on which Hawthorne insists, — however hard they are bearing on the individual. Pessimism is an indictment of the moral order of the world, and is essential atheism. Hawthorne stood at the opposite pole. His main function in literature was to illustrate the tragical consequences of broken law when the law was fundamental in character or in society. He was almost slavishly logical, — putting Dimmesdale into the lowest hell of the Inferno and Hester in Purgatorio, where penalty purifies and makes the sufferer glad.

Absolute as was his insight, and perfect as was his art, he has not escaped criticism. There is general agreement that his pages are overcharged with symbolism. But which flower will you uproot in that garden “of a thousand hues,” though “Narcissus that still weeps in vain” blossom too often there?

Graver criticism is sometimes heard, — as

that he has no sympathy with his characters in their suffering. So far as it touches the "Scarlet Letter" it should be sufficient refutation to read what he himself says in his "English Note-Books," in comparing Thackeray's "coolness in respect to his own pathos," with his own emotions when he read the last scene of the "Scarlet Letter" to his wife, just after writing it, — "tried to read it rather, for my voice swelled and heaved, as if I were tossed up and down on an ocean as it subsides after a storm."

It is not well to search an author too closely as to his feeling over the creatures of his imagination. You may find nothing or everything, according to temperament or literary sense. The great author hides himself behind his canvas. Hawthorne, the most reticent of men and with the keenest sense of literary propriety, is the most impersonal of writers in his greater works. He tells us nothing except what may be inferred from characteristics constantly recurring throughout his pages. Now nothing is more revealing in an author than his style; it is almost a better witness to his character than his assertions. It is like the voice in conversation that speaks from

the soul rather than the mind. There are in Hawthorne's style four invariable features,—reverence, sincerity, delicacy, and humanity; each is nearly absolute. Together they stand for heart. No matter how silently it throbs, a writer who puts these qualities into his pages is to be counted as one who pities his fellow men even when most relentless in tracing their sins. It may also be set down as a general principle, that truth is akin to pity as pity is akin to love. The great virtues do not lie far apart.

The criticism is oftenest urged in connection with Hester, who is both the centre of interest and of the problem. Hawthorne takes utmost pains to make it clear how she lived. Whether she was happy or not he did not undertake to say; he would not raise so useless a question. The tragedy is pitched at too high a key for happiness. Possibly there may be victory after slow-healing wounds, but there can be no amelioration by circumstance or by deadening of sensibility. The following pages from the thirteenth chapter furnish an answer to the question whether in her case the book gravitates toward despair or points to recovery and life.

“Hester Prynne did not now occupy precisely the same position in which we beheld her during the earlier periods of her ignominy. Years had come and gone. Pearl was now seven years old. Her mother, with the scarlet letter on her breast, glittering in its fantastic embroidery, had long been a familiar object to the townspeople. As is apt to be the case when a person stands out in any prominence before the community, and, at the same time, interferes neither with public nor individual interests and convenience, a species of general regard had ultimately grown up in reference to Hester Prynne. It is to the credit of human nature, that, except where its selfishness is brought into play, it loves more readily than it hates. Hatred, by a gradual and quiet process, will even be transformed to love, unless the change be impeded by a continually new irritation of the original feeling of hostility. In this matter of Hester Prynne, there was neither irritation nor irksomeness. She never battled with the public, but submitted, uncomplainingly, to its worst usage; she made no claim upon it, in requital for what she suffered; she did not weigh upon its sympathies. Then, also, the blameless purity of her life

during all these years in which she had been set apart to infamy was reckoned largely in her favor. With nothing now to lose, in the sight of mankind, and with no hope, and seemingly no wish, of gaining anything, it could only be a genuine regard for virtue that had brought back the poor wanderer to its paths.

“It was perceived, too, that while Hester never put forward even the humblest title to share in the world’s privileges, — further than to breathe the common air, and earn daily bread for little Pearl and herself by the faithful labor of her hands, — she was quick to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of man, whenever benefits were to be conferred. None so ready as she to give of her little substance to every demand of poverty; even though the bitter-hearted pauper threw back a gibe in requital of the food brought regularly to his door, or the garments wrought for him by the fingers that could have embroidered a monarch’s robe. None so self-devoted as Hester, when pestilence stalked through the town. In all seasons of calamity, indeed, whether general or of individuals, the outcast of society at once found her place.

She came, not as a guest, but as a rightful inmate, into the household that was darkened by trouble; as if its gloomy twilight were a medium in which she was entitled to hold intercourse with her fellow-creatures. There glimmered the embroidered letter, with comfort in its unearthly ray. Elsewhere the token of sin, it was the taper of the sick-chamber. It had even thrown its gleam, in the sufferer's hard extremity, across the verge of time. It had shown him where to set his foot, while the light of earth was fast becoming dim, and ere the light of futurity could reach him. In such emergencies, Hester's nature showed itself warm and rich; a well-spring of human tenderness, unfailing to every real demand, and inexhaustible by the largest. Her breast, with its badge of shame, was but the softer pillow for the head that needed one. She was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy; or, we may rather say, the world's heavy hand had so ordained her, when neither the world nor she looked forward to this result. The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was found in her, — so much power to do, and power to sympathize, — that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original

signification. They said that it meant Able ; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength.

“ It was only the darkened house that could contain her. When sunshine came again, she was not there. Her shadow had faded across the threshold. The helpful inmate had departed, without one backward glance to gather up the meed of gratitude, if any were in the hearts of those whom she had served so zealously. Meeting them in the street, she never raised her head to receive their greeting. If they were resolute to accost her, she laid her finger on the scarlet letter, and passed on. This might be pride, but was so like humility, that it produced all the softening influences of the latter quality on the public mind. The public is despotic in its temper ; it is capable of denying common justice, when too strenuously demanded as a right ; but quite as frequently it awards more than justice, when the appeal is made, as despots love to have it made, entirely to its generosity. Interpreting Hester Prynne's deportment as an appeal of this nature, society was inclined to show its former victim a more benign countenance than she cared to be favored with, or, perchance, than she deserved.”

This exquisite rehearsal of Christian service and temper might well win for her canonization. It is the picture of a saint. The very things that Christ made the condition of acceptance at the last judgment she fulfilled; and the graces that St. Paul declared to be the fruit of the Spirit were exemplified in her daily life. Plainly, this is not a picture of despair, nor even of suffering, except that which necessarily haunts a true soul that has done evil. God forbid that it should be different with any of us! Forgiveness is not lethean. To forget our past would defraud the soul of its heritage in life. The scarlet letter faded out and even acquired another meaning. Her life came to blessed uses with rewards of love and gratitude from others that reached even unto death. The logic of this tender picture of a saintly life — a gospel in itself — must not be overlooked. Hawthorne certainly did not mean that the reader should miss the point. How could recovery from sin be better told, or be more complete? When Peter had denied his Lord and wept bitterly over it, all he was told to do was to feed his Master's sheep. Hester's forgiveness did not shape itself in the form of ecstatic visions, but

of service in the spirit of Him who bore witness to the truth; and by herself bearing witness to it she won the reward of its freedom.

To the last touch of his pen Hawthorne keeps up the symbolism that both hides and reveals his meaning, and leaves us in such a mood as when, on some autumn day, we watch mountain and river and sky faintly shrouded in haze until we wonder if these and life itself be real, — an experience tenderly rendered by Longfellow in his poem on Hawthorne. He lived in his dreams, but his dreams were as real as the earth and as true as life.

Strangers in Boston still search the burial ground of King's Chapel for the grave of Hester Prynne: so true a story, they think, must be true in fact. If it were found they might ask, What does the armorial device mean?

“ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A, GULES.”

Does the scarlet letter stand for sin or for cleansing? Is the epitaph a word of despair or of hope? In what direction did Hawthorne intend to lead our thought? If asked, he would have said, Read out of your own heart.

THE SECRET OF HORACE BUSHNELL

"If admiration is not misplaced when bestowed on one who unites the attributes of the poet and the philosopher, it will not fail to be evoked by the character and genius of Horace Bushnell." — PROFESSOR GEORGE P. FISHER, D. D., LL. D.

"He was the inaugurator of a movement greater than he knew, and he was full of impulses the significance of which even he did not understand. There was in him the old creative spirit, with the literary method as opposed to the formal, and his break with the past at one supreme point — atonement — and at two or three subordinate points was a prophecy of the coming inevitable reorganization of theology." — REV. GEORGE A. GORDON, D. D., *Ultimate Conceptions of Faith*, p. 67.

"But, — 'felt a mighty conviction of spiritual realities and a desire to live in them,' — tells and sums up in a word the effect most memorable to me that proceeded from my personal companionship and communion with Horace Bushnell from first to last." — REV. JOSEPH H. TWICHELL, *Bushnell Centenary*, 1902.

"Nature is a kind of illuminated table of contents of the Spirit." — NOVALIS.

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THE truest thing to be said of Horace Bushnell is what Harnack said of Luther : "He liberated the natural life, and the natural order of things."

In quoting this remark, I would emphasize the word *natural*, and the point I would make is, that the ultimate ground of Bushnell's thought, the secret and law of it, is to be found in his relation to *nature*.

It is not necessary to raise the question how it happened that he was keyed to nature in this fundamental way and kept so true to its note. Or, if we attempt an answer, we may go to the realm of nature itself for an analogy if not an answer. Nature is always breaking out into surprises under slight changes of environment. The seeds of genius and greatness are wide-sown, and as by a blind hand. Heredity grows every day more mysterious. We no longer inherit only the qualities of parents or grandsires. As true it may be that the marked thing in us dates a score of

generations back. That unspeakable mystery named life is not diluted ; it may lie hidden — waiting its opportunity — until at last it blossoms and lets out its hidden beauty or power. As we think of Bushnell's birth, a century ago, into the sternest of the New England life, we marvel how his mind ever began to unfold in free and natural ways. But when God calls a man for a special work he provides ways to make the election sure. First of all, he had the endowment — another mystery of our being — a little more from the open hand of the Creator, a fibre spun more finely, an eye with keener and broader vision, a heart that throbs with stronger beat ; we call it genius. What genius will do, or where it will go, there is no telling. In Bushnell's case it drove him to nature in the special form of observing its laws and getting at its methods, and, above all, by entering into sympathy with these laws and methods. Bred in the fresh, free air of Litchfield, where every cloud and stream and hill spoke of nature to his brooding soul, and every day's task in field or shop was packed full of laws that struck a chord to which thought responded ; touched in deeper ways by every mention

of God ;—thus bred, and charged to the full with all that nature could breathe into him, he went down to Yale, where thought inevitably started question, and question inevitably begot doubt ; for everybody who thought questioned, and happy was he who did not doubt and deny. In short, Bushnell found himself in the world of theology. The time was over when day was bound to day by natural piety, and the day had come when, instead, he heard only disputes, and arguments, and doctrines hammered into or out of shape on the anvil of logic. What wonder that early visions of God faded out, and — between hard work in college and preaching that chiefly bred only denial — he fell away into a sort of numbness of soul, or, when roused to thought, he thought only to deny and reject ?

So it was until a crisis came and action was forced upon him with great struggles of soul, when the angel of his nature came to him and taught him to say : “ My heart wants the Father ; my heart wants the Son ; my heart wants the Holy Ghost — and one just as much as the other.” This was not an echo from Schleiermacher, nor was it borne in upon him

from the mystics. He was dealing with himself in a strictly natural way ; even Scripture seemed not to influence him ; he was left alone with his own nature, and followed its dictate.

This early experience is outlined in his "Moral Uses of Dark Things," where he says: "We learn about nature by going directly to nature herself, putting our ear to her voices, observing her changes with our eyes." "God wants to have us go directly to the subjects of duty — all subjects of a moral and spiritual nature — and learn what they are from themselves. Too much report and talk would ruin us ; we should never know anything *first-hand*" — an incessant phrase with Bushnell — "if we were all the while obtruded upon by revelations of message and story. Real conviction goes before talk, and is grounded in the soul's own thinking of subjects and questions themselves." Here is Bushnell at the outset — himself entering the open door of the Kingdom of God, by steps pointed out through the play of his own nature as it is moved upon by the Spirit of God. The most marked thing in him is his fidelity to this habit, — continuous, inflexible, domi-

nant, and decisive. Whatever the question or subject, — spiritual or material, theological or political, personal or civic, — he plunged at once into the depths of its nature, never staying on the surface longer than to name it; and when he had found out its elements, its relations and action, he emerged with a principle, a truth, a conviction, or a method in his hand ready for use. So it was from first to last. This search, and the method of it, was, for the most part, conducted by himself alone. “First-hand” was his watchword. He was criticised for over self-confidence, — conceit it was sometimes called. Bushnell was not conceited; but he was immensely self-reliant and there had been begotten in him a tremendous sense of power, — two things then greatly needed. At no time in the history of our New England theology was there so much bewilderment and contradiction as when he came upon the stage. Far back, or down deep in the body of orthodoxy, there had been a fatal mistake over the very nature of man. Some sense of it was felt, and with it the necessity of correcting it. Hence the age of *improvement*, as it was gently termed. To save the churches and the faith was the one

thought of all earnest minds. It was not merely a lust for theologizing — a contagious disease indeed — nor personal forth-putting that led to their various theories and distinctions. They were mending their house, not tearing down and building anew, and every man had a board, a window, or a door that he thought would conduce to the improvement. The greatness of their mistake should only deepen the pathos with which we look back upon it from to-day. Bushnell seems to have been the only man who measured and felt it as it was. He was caught between the upper and nether millstones of the contending schools, and was bruised, though not ground to powder, between them. His sympathies may have been more strongly with one side than the other, but his theology and his method belonged to neither. In 1851, when already past middle life, — stung beyond endurance not only by treatment of himself, but by a full realization of the wretched condition into which theology had fallen, — he put out a volume, now rare, entitled “Christ in Theology.” In some respects it is the most brilliant of his books. There is here no loitering as if loath to leave his thought, — brilliant,

sententious, and always with a splendid sense of strength and vitality, a rushing torrent from title-page to colophon, — carrying out to sea a great deal of disjointed lumber, not to say rubbish, and leaving the up-country in a much healthier and more peaceful condition. But it is also a sad book. The page in which this theological chaos is described is as true as it is graphic. It also has the value of showing that he had an interior knowledge of New England theology, and only too well understood to what end it was paving the way: “To see brought up in distinct array before us the multitudes of leaders, and schools, and theologic wars of only the century past, — the Supralapsarians and Sublapsarians; the Arminianizers and the true Calvinists; the Pelagians and Augustinians; the Tasters and the Exercisers; Exercisers by divine efficiency and by human self-efficiency; the love-to-being-in-general virtue, the willing-to-be-damned virtue, and the love-to-one’s-greatest-happiness virtue; no ability, all ability, and moral and natural ability distinguished; disciples by the new-creating act of Omnipotence, and by change of the governing purpose; atonement by punishment and by expression; limited and

general ; by imputation and without imputation ; trinitarians of a threefold distinction, of three psychologic persons, or of three sets of attributes ; under a unity of oneness, or of necessary agreement, or of society and deliberative council : nothing, I think, would more certainly disenchant us of our confidence in systematic orthodoxy, and the possibility in human language of an exact theologic science, than an exposition so practical and serious, and withal so indisputably mournful, — so mournfully indisputable.”

When we look back on this chaos of conflicting opinions that often aspired to the dignity of doctrines, and upon the way in which Bushnell strove to escape from it, we are reminded of the legend that in the first days of creation some of the greater angels came down to earth to see what was going on, and returned, saying there was danger lest dear old chaos be overturned to make way for this new and dreadful idea of cosmos, and — worst of all — by natural law.

As metaphysics seemed to lie at the bottom of this sweltering chaos — and certainly it was its vehicle — he turned fiercely upon it : “Metaphysics have never established any-

thing. The last new teacher is always about to do it, and the coterie gathered about him are quite certain that he has ; but it turns out very shortly that he has rather multiplied the questions than settled any of them." Nothing could be truer so far as it relates to the multiplication of diverse doctrines. Every variation had been hammered out on that anvil. Bushnell did not speak vaguely. The theological schools were in his eye, and their students were educated on the very matter that bred and fed their conflicts. What wonder that when nurtured on stones they should continue to hurl them ? Bushnell revolted at the outset ; he was from the first dominated by another way of thinking. He drank from other fountains, and fed on other food, and saw with different eyes. He never approached a subject in the dialectic way, but always through the nature of the thing involved : What are its laws ? how is it composed ? what are its relations ? how does it act ? It was this that made him so interesting and often fascinating as a writer ; not that he gives you new facts, for sometimes he is lacking in attainable data and occasionally he goes astray in them, yet how charmingly he

discourses, and how many things he points out that are true and are not to be found elsewhere ! Any good botanist can tell us more than we find in that most vital essay, " Life, or the Lives," but it takes more than a botanist to make us feel that " this boundless wave of Life is, in some high sense, a wave of joy ;" and that " if you leave the soul out of an organized thing, all analysis of it is a kind of analytic murder."

Bushnell's plain speaking led to criticism. From every quarter — Princeton, New Haven, East Windsor, Boston, and Bangor — came the charge of *naturalism*, a true and fatal charge if Bushnell meant by nature what his critics meant. It is not strange the first and heaviest criticism was made at this point. His divergence from his brethren was wide and radical ; they differed as to the very nature of creation ; their worlds were not the same.

But whatever was Bushnell's view of nature, and however he came by it, he did not go to nature for the sake of easy thinking, nor to escape the uncertainty of metaphysics. Bushnell proposed to take the deepest possible plunge into them — even into the heart

of nature itself — its heights as well as its depths. But nature is not an open page that he who runs may read. It is eternal and endless mystery. We never go far before we are forced to stop and say — *God*, and that only. And what are we doing to-day but asking if we have gone far enough in any direction to find solid ground? Robinson's great saying has broadened, and while we still look for more light to break out of God's Holy Word, we are also looking into that larger word — the Logos — the whole spoken word of God whose accents are ever falling on attentive ears. Here, at least, Bushnell went, finding — as he believed — certainty because, as he contended in his very first thesis, "Nature is a system in which everything fulfills its end."

Bushnell was abundantly charged with being illogical. If by logic is meant a formal logic, a propositional and syllogistic logic (of which Jowett said that it is neither a science nor an art but a dodge), doubtless the charge was true. But this is not real logic. Logic is the agreement of things; realities with other realities, not the agreement of words about them, and these words hemmed in as to their meaning by definition. Logic is the true re-

cognition of nature. It is the recognition of the universe and all things and processes in it as one system. Bushnell's logic was of this sort, — the logic of a universal and infinite oneness. Thus he found his way into a valid theism, and escaped its fatal enemy, dualism. His logic and his theism form an endless chain that plays between nature, as we term it, and God. The motion is endless ; the links are forged by God's hand — links but not fetters, holding God and man together in human freedom and yet in eternal necessity ; insoluble mystery ! but it means order and oneness ; anything different is chaos.

If we were to take up Bushnell's treatises in order, we should find what we have called his *secret* underlying each one and the soul of it ; each is an appeal to nature in its great sense. Take his theory of language as stated in the introduction to "God in Christ." Criticism, not yet ended and often bordering on contempt, has been heaped upon it. Nor is it strange. It was like making a new alphabet. What wonder that men who wrote and taught by definition scouted it ? In no respect is the difference between Bushnell and his critics so wide as at this point. It is to

the lasting honor of his genius that, almost before he had traced a line in the way of a treatise, — as if foreseeing what tasks of high import lay before him, — he wrought out this theory, the fundamental thought of which is, that words are but symbols or shadows or hints of the things named; these lie behind the words, — spiritual realities that can only be suggested by names drawn from material things; names that suggest but do not define nor compass. The Rev. E. M. Chapman has well described it as “a declaration against the tyranny of set phrase.” It is indeed an inconvenient theory for those who imprison thought within words; but for poets and common people and all who use language naturally, and for the ordinary exchange of thought and feeling, it is the theory that ordinary people and also extraordinary people, like Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Tennyson, will always use. In adopting it Bushnell did not ambush himself in order to shoot and escape returning shots, but simply to get into the natural language of the world; nor would he break the bond between natural expression and the subtlest thought, because it possibly might let in uncertainty.

We see the same thing in his "Christian Nurture." This great book can be looked at in many ways, — theological, ecclesiastical, civic, and domestic, — but its emphasis certainly rests on the family; and nowhere is nature so imperative and so strict in its laws as here. One who overlooks this misses the meaning of the book. With Bushnell Christian nurture was, from first to last, a question of nature. It was the unnaturalness of the treatment of children by the churches of the day that fixed his attention and called out his protest. Their nature was wronged, twisted out of shape, and inverted in all its processes. Instead of their angels beholding the face of their Father in heaven, they were children of wrath, with the implication of its decreed fulfillment hanging over their cradles, and with no means of escape except through the fervors of chance revivals. The whole matter was a denial of human instincts in their most sacred relations. The horror of it was relieved only by its sincerity and the agony of parental hearts that often rebelled against it. It is an old saying that Calvinism breaks down when it comes to children, — a saying justified by recent changes at that point. Bushnell broke

into this chaos of systematic theology by demanding simply a natural treatment of the child, placing him once more in the arms of the Saviour, and thence back into the home for Christian nurture.

Of course, by its very terms, nature is the main feature of "Nature and the Supernatural." Here his central thought had full play; not nature in its usual restricted sense, — as with the naturalist who stays within its form and process, — but nature as comprising these, and going beyond into universal being, even God who is included in its category. Bushnell could go in no other path but this. He could not think except as his mind ran along some natural channel. He could see nothing but law and its processes; even the free play of man's mind and will and the behests of the Almighty were in a *supra* but not *contra* natural world. By this extension of nature he escaped necessity and found freedom as a son of God, and miracles became natural. "The being of God is a kind of law to his working," as he says, quoting the great Hooker. This book is usually regarded as the most thorough of his works. Exception may be taken to this view. There are chapters that might well be

left out — so far off the track are they, and so tinged with outworn dogma and credulous testimony. Taking the treatise as a whole, nothing more central or more fundamental came from him than its main contention that nature and the supernatural form the one system of God. It is a kind of Copernican truth, embracing heaven and earth, and magnificently lodged in the minds of a generation that had not even dreamed it. However the tides of theological thought may flow, let science assert or deny what it must, this truth, like gravitation itself, remains unshaken and immovable. The ultimate dread of the theologians of the day was pantheism; deism was next door to it, and Bushnell's naturalism was held to pave the way along this *decensus Averni*. They were not protesting against trifles nor "counting the steps of fleas," and Bushnell took special pains to guard against the imputation by ample denial and explanation. "It is not the supernatural submitting itself to nature to be buried and lost, but going down to hook itself in upon nature by seizing on the analogies of thought and law, so to become fast locked in all the terms of experience and opinion which thought has generated. The bent we are thus

receiving more and more distinctly towards nature and science is not wholly mischievous, as many appear to assume in their nervous dread of naturalism, but is our instinctive endeavor to obtain a new anchorage ground for Christian truth and ideas, where they will hold us more firmly and yield us a more settled confidence."

He speaks to the same effect in the essay, "Life, or the Lives:" —

"Things above sense, the reverend mysteries of God and religion, now throng about the man, firing his imagination, and challenging a ready faith. Having passed within the rind of matter, and by its mechanical laws, and discovered there a more potent, multitudinous, self-active world of life, his higher affinities are wakened, drawing him away to the common Father, whose life is in him, as in them, and to those meditations of the future otherwise faint and dim in their evidence."

These two passages are autobiographic as well as prophetic. He was himself an embodied realization of his own words, — "Nature and the Supernatural forming the one system of God." The entire play of his mind in treatise, sermon, essay, was a vindication of

this phrase ; — himself speaking to himself, revealing the secret of his own being and of all being. It was because he lived so profoundly in nature — finding it everywhere an analogon of the spirit — that he came to know the things of God, and God himself. It flows, a happy and mystic stream, through all his pages ; as when he writes of Niagara, which seemed to open his soul down to its inmost depths, and to show him his capacity “to think and feel greater things concerning God.”

But nowhere is Bushnell’s immersion in nature so clearly seen as in his “Moral Uses of Dark Things.” In these fascinating pages he lays hold of nature in its obscurities, its diseases, its dangers, its mutabilities, and, as Keats says : —

“Sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving.”

So he wrests them from the hands of pessimism and forces from them their secret, and lo ! they are a part of the one system of God, and not discords, nor shadows cast from some city of dreadful night.

It may seem to some that we speak of Bushnell as if Butler and Paley and Edwards

had not lived, and that there were no preachers in New England who strengthened and adorned their sermons by illustrations drawn from nature. We have not forgotten these great teachers. The debt we owe to the Bridgewater School of divines is too great to be overlooked ; but it did not penetrate to the meaning of nature, nor did it make clear the relation of God to nature. He still dwelt in distant heavens while the works of his hand praised him here below. Creation had no unity save by a metaphysical inference. There was no vital relation between the facts and forms of nature and its truths. Bushnell, out-running his day, conceived of God as immanent in his works — the soul and life of them. Their laws are his laws. Therefore, if one would know how God feels and thinks and acts, one must go to nature, and to humanity as its culmination. God is the spiritual reality of which nature is a manifestation. Bushnell not only saw this with absolute clearness, but he was entranced with it. It dominated him and forced his thought along its paths. Hence, when he came to speak of the Trinity his lips could utter no other word but *manifestation*. His semi-Sabellianism — a

heresy, if it be a heresy, to which he was foreordained — is the inevitable corollary to an immanent God. If God appears from within, — in things or in humanity, — it must be as a manifestation; God becomes man. It does not matter that Bushnell assents in his own way to the Nicene Symbol, and is accorded a seat in that pantheon of ancient orthodoxy. If he lays down a conception of God as always “threeing” himself, which justifies the use of persons, it is only as he finds supporting analogies in *human nature*, for wherever he goes that banner is still over him; — and also because it presents God as “a being practically related to his creatures.” But the threeing makes no numerical revelation of his interior nature, but only his power of so manifesting himself. Yet, prior avowals — not antagonistic — still bind him. He does not forfeit his birthright of clear vision, nor give up the secret of nature which he — first of all about him — had seen, and subject himself to current interpretations of ancient formulas of belief; they were well enough, but that was all. He was still a self-contained, independent thinker, who went his own way and marked his course by the visions of truth granted to

him as he went along, — agreeing with others and with the past when he could, but under his own terms.

It was the same when he came to the “Vicarious Sacrifice.” He did not array texts (except to interpret them as altar-forms under his theory of language); nor did he quote the Fathers of the first three or the last three centuries, but carried his subject straight into “the facts and demonstrations occurring all the while in our human relations.” And here he stayed until the end. For the “governmental theory” he cared but little; and with the “penal or expiatory theory” he would have nought to do. The “moral view” was his view to the last. Those who regard his “Forgiveness and Law” as a return to either of those theories must have forgotten its first pages, in which he says: “I recant no one of my denials. I still assert the moral view of the Atonement as before, and even more completely than before,” because he refers it to the “moral pronouncements of human nature and society.” And still more clearly does he affirm his lifelong thought, — “We cannot interpret God except by what we find in our own personal instincts and ideas.” Whether

he advanced or strengthened the "moral view" of the Atonement by the second volume may be questioned, but however that may be, any interpretation of it as a recantation is to be regarded as a mistake in reading his own words. This second volume, taken as a whole, is simply a reëmphasis or extension of the patripassianism that runs through all his pages. It should be said, however, that he finds a kind of self-wrought propitiation of God, but it is natural and not forensic. If this takes him into the temple of ancient orthodoxy, he stands in the outer court, and with eyes turned toward the broad fields of life and not to the altars of sacrifice. We would be explicit here. If, as Bushnell contends, God renders himself more placable through the sufferings of his Son, it is not in the interest of righteousness — expiatory or governmental — but of infinite, all-mastering love; but, he says, "it could by no possibility hold any one of the forms of legal atonement offered by the schools." It has, however, made no headway as a phase of the Atonement. Thought is not moving in that direction, but rather away from it, and is grounding itself more and more on the "moral view,"

which accords so well with the great duties and capacities of humanity.

In the same way, also, he treats the divinity of Jesus ; reversing the prevalent method, and approaching it from the purely human or natural side. He says : " There is no way to make out his divinity so effective and true as to put him down into humanity, under the laws of humanity, and see, from his childhood onward, whether he stays there." " The closer we bring him down to manhood, the more evidently, visibly, indisputably divine He appears." These somewhat enigmatic sentences remind one of the fourth of Robertson's six principles, — the substance of which he puts in a pregnant phrase : " Perfectly human, therefore divine." The time had come when such a word must be spoken. Each came to it in his own way : Robertson through the Germans ; Bushnell along the path of his own insight. Unconsciously, he put himself in accord with the highest form of evolutionary philosophy ; as Browning states it in " Paracelsus : " —

" All tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far ;
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God."

The unity of nature thus fulfills itself : come from God in its remotest forms, it finds its way back to man, and through perfect man to God from whom he came. Every stage is natural and also supernatural, and thus forms one system. If Bushnell did not work this out completely to its inevitable conclusion, he was always hovering near it. Indeed, it must be said of him that he was a theologian of beginnings ; he completed nothing. He attempted to finish by thought what could not yet be achieved ; by light, but the full day had not dawned. Each of his great contentions is essentially true ; but each requires what could not be given in his own nor in any previous day. " Christian Nurture " and the early chapters of the " Vicarious Sacrifice " come nearest to being exceptions. But theology to-day calls for all latest knowledge to fill it out as a science ; — psychology, ethnology, language, the physical sciences, civics, and, above all, history, not only as annals but as the inner life of the nations, — this knowledge Bushnell had only in part, but he wonderfully, if not fully, forestalled it by his own observing eye and penetrating mind, and by his passionate sense of the unity of God, and its corollary of God

and nature as forming one system. Driven by his own nature into nature, — among her laws and processes and intelligences, — he finds himself in God. The great secret is revealed. Not in the heavens above nor in the depths below, but evermore within, — within our own minds and hearts ; within the seed and within the centre of the seed, evermore within is God to be found. Bushnell did not trace to the end the outworking of his own secret as it evolved itself in his thought and experience ; nor will the mysteries lodged within the created universe and in the soul of man, which is a part of it, ever cease to unfold themselves. There is not another universe that drops its message or its laws down into this, as from some outward world. All that is, or can be for us, is this order in which we have our being, — nature and the supernatural, — one system of God who is in it in all the plenitude of his being ; one system in which things are analogons of the spirit, and all are the Logos of God. Bushnell did not wholly attain ; who has ever attained, or will ? But he moved mightily in the right direction, — with great splendor of speech, with a genius that illumined every subject he touched, with

a fervor and sincerity that raised a great mind into a great spiritual force which still inspires the souls of men, and moves them to name him as a true interpreter of the divine secret of nature, having first made it his own.

A LAYMAN'S REFLECTIONS ON MUSIC

"There is something sacramental in perfect metre and rhythm. They are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace, namely, of the self-possessed and victorious temper of one who has so far subdued nature as to be able to hear that universal sphere-music of hers, speaking of which Mr. Carlyle says that 'all deepest thoughts instinctively vent themselves in song.'"

— CHARLES KINGSLEY.

"I can easily persuade myself, that, if the world were free, — free, I mean, of themselves, — brought up, all, out of work into the pure inspiration of truth and charity, new forms of personal and intellectual beauty would appear, and society itself reveal the Orphic movement. No more will it be imagined that poetry and rhythm are accidents or figments of the race, one side of all ingredient or ground in nature. But we shall know that poetry is the real and true state of man, the proper and last ideal of souls, the free beauty they long for, and the rhythmic flow of that universal play in which all life would live." — HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D., *Work and Play*, p. 42.

"All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in song. The meaning of song goes deep. Poetry, therefore, we will call musical thought. See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it." — THOMAS CARLYLE.

A LAYMAN'S REFLECTIONS ON MUSIC

It was a remark of Mendelssohn that there are two subjects which are too sacred for discussion, — religion and thorough-bass.

Religion and music are not only alike sacred, but they touch at so many points that they can hardly be separated, and in their higher ranges they melt into one. There are debased forms of music that have no suggestion of religion, and there are debased religions that do not call for music ; but when worthy of their name they pass into each other as by creative affinity.

I hope I shall do no wrong to the memory of the great composer, who was himself a fine illustration of the blending of the two, if I discuss them somewhat, for the purpose of showing not simply that music is helpful to religion, but that there is a scientific reality in those phrases, usually regarded as poetical, which speak of music as divine and as an exponent of the spiritual world ; in other words,

that music is literally, as Collins named it, a "Heavenly Maid."

The first thing that strikes one who reflects on music is its uniqueness ; it is like nothing else that men do. If a visitor from a songless planet were to come to earth, nothing would amaze him more than the use of the voice in singing. He could put other things together with more or less of understanding, but music would be a hopeless puzzle. It lies so close and is so wrought into us that we are blind to the wonder of it. Browning has finely touched this point in his "Abt Vogler : " —

"And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to
man,

That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but
a star.

Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;
It is everywhere in the world — loud, soft, and all is said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought :
And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow
the head ! "

Let us turn into a church on a Sunday morning. The service will consist of prayers, readings, a sermon, and something very different from these, called the *music*. It is not like the sermon, which is an appeal to thought ; it does not ask anything, as do the

prayers ; it does not declare anything, as do the lessons from the Bible ; it may use words, but does not depend upon them ; it may suggest, but does not insist on thought. The contrast is still greater in the method of expression. The ordinary use of the voice is set aside for a peculiar use of it, — almost as if there were two voices in one person, suggesting a dual being. Instead of the conversational voice, which is without regard to pitch or time or harmony, the organs of speech are brought under the action of the will, which directs them to speak in a certain manner that is rigidly determined by certain laws pertaining to the air in its relation to the organs. There may be no absolute difference between the speaking and the singing voice in pronouncing a single syllable, but when it is sung there is a distinct act of the will, by which pitch is given and preserved, and if sung in concert, harmony also is preserved. The fundamental act in conversation is thought ; in singing it is an act of the will. The voice, obeying a certain conception which has been passed over to the will, strikes a certain key or note, which it keeps in mind, and repeats at intervals. How it is able to

repeat this note is an absolute mystery. We only know that, directed by some conception within, the voice is able to produce a certain vibration of the air which always yields the same sound. This vibration is rapid beyond conception, yet the exact number can be reproduced time after time, not only by one voice, but by a multitude of voices. All things are perhaps equally wonderful when looked at closely, but in some cases the mystery is more apparent and striking than in others. What is more wonderful than that the human voice by a conscious act can duplicate a sound that is what it is by virtue of an almost infinitely rapid vibration of the air? There is no explanation of it except on the theory that there is something correspondingly infinite in the mind that does it. As it is a matter of the highest mathematics, it must be that the mind is the mathematician that masters the problem, so that every singing child is an unconscious Helmholtz, and even more, since it does by nature what he has only described.

But let us go back to the church. Four or more singers begin this wonderful use of the voice. They strike a key, from which they

make a certain departure, higher or lower, but are held by the key, as birds might fly when held by a cord. The parts also vary, departing from the fundamental note, but always within certain limits. They have no liberty of range, except as it is determined by unalterable laws; though, as Milton says, "some musicians are wont skillfully to fall out of one key into another without breach of harmony." Under such inflexible restrictions the choir begin to *sing*, as it is called. Every note is determined by law; the relation of the parts to one another and to the key is a matter which, if examined, resolves itself into mathematics. The singers are simply starting the air about them into certain regular periodic vibrations, which they are able to measure and to reproduce by some faculty which we call *ear*. The whole operation is fundamentally mathematical, and is conducted under laws to which the singers are able to render exact obedience.

But how do they use these laws? By combining the sounds in a certain way, — slow or rapid, high or low, in one combination or another, — they arouse certain emotions in the minds of the hearers, which may be

deepened in several ways, as by exactness of time, by accuracy of harmony, by modulation, by purity and volume of tone, but chiefly by a personal something which the singers throw into their voices. We call it feeling or soul or expression, — words that conceal our ignorance, yet name an undoubted reality. That one singer can put into certain notes or vibrations of air an emotion which is felt by those who listen, such as another cannot, is the marvel of marvels. The notes, the vibrations of air, the time, the harmony, the accuracy of rendering, are alike, but one induces a feeling which the other does not. Music, when viewed scientifically, is not very abstruse ; it is more nearly within reach than light or electricity or chemical affinity. It is largely a matter of atmospheric vibration and rhythm. The air is an easy subject of examination ; its action is readily determined by experiment ; and rhythm, or accentuated time, is a simple matter. The strange thing is that when we have brought the whole operation, whether it comes from the voice or the organ or the orchestra, within the compass of science, and put every part of it under its law, so that we have the entire process

set down in its equivalents, we have not touched the essential nature of it. So far it is a matter of mathematics,—air set to quicker or slower vibration, in greater or less volume, with a narrow play of time accentuation.

But we have not come to church for this. It does not explain why, when the organ prelude sends out its first soft notes, hardly heard, mere breathings of sound, then gently passes on to others that die away, or, acquiring force, grow strong and confident and swell into loudness, and at last call in other notes as allies, and so move on till the instrument leaps an octave higher, calling in still other sounds, and, finally dropping to lower tones, adds strength to gentleness,—this does not explain why with these sounds a great change comes over us; why care and weariness slowly dissolve, and peace and rest take their place; nor why our mood and thought change under the changing tones, growing calmer and stronger as the instrument sends out louder, more complex, and firmer tones, until at last it has subdued us unto its own apparent temper. No analysis of music explains why it excites emotion or thought

within us. And yet we are forced to the conclusion that in some way the emotion or thought is closely bound up with these same mathematical formulas, and even that they have a necessary or organic relation. The vibration of air and the emotion are not arbitrary associates, but run back into some common unity in which they both exist; and it must be that it is in that underlying unity, in that meeting-ground of mathematical law and human emotion, that the explanation of the power of one over the other is to be found. Or, in plainer language, these laws of atmospheric vibration and rhythm and tonality, when properly used, take us into a world of real cause; for the sake of a name, let us call it the world of the spirit.

If these facts indicate a substantial unity of creation, let us not hold back. It is only by recognizing such unity that we reach a real or spiritual basis of things. We do not thus merge all things in the material creation, but we rather carry material things back into the spiritual world. Music is not a matter of atmospheric vibration, rhythm, and harmony, but is a spiritual thing having them as its body.

Let us play a little with our thought, and as, when the organist suffers his fingers to wander over the keys, he sometimes strikes out a melody, so we perhaps may hit upon truth worth heeding. Creation finally is inexplicable, but it is well to have some working hypothetical conception of it. The most satisfactory conception is that it proceeds from an eternal and spiritual world under fixed laws. Creation rests upon this spiritual world, but is shut off from it; it is itself the barrier, and at the same time it is an expression of this world. It is the world of order, of truth, of love, of joy, of reality. The secret of life is to break through the barrier of created things, or rather to use it as a pathway, into the world of spiritual reality. We came forth from it, we shall return into it; meanwhile the main business of humanity is to keep up communication with it, to take shape under it, and to partake of its eternal life. If we ask why we are drawn out from the world of the spirit into a finite creation and returned to it, we ask the forever unanswerable question. Personal existence is a mystery that eternity itself may not solve; but that we live and have our

being in a spiritual order is a truth which is the necessary and final outcome of all thought. Unless we believe this, there is not much occasion for believing anything; and conduct has little worth or dignity except as it proceeds from such a belief. Life depends upon maintaining proper relations to environment; but man has a twofold environment, a material and a spiritual. While he must adjust himself to each, he uses one in order to reach the other, where alone he finds the end of life.

The plea of pessimism, the puzzle in philosophy, the stumbling-block in social science, the uncertain element in all thought, the irreducible factor in every human problem, — all spring out of the fact that we exceed our material environment, we outmeasure the material world in which we find ourselves. Hence we predicate another world, not a future one alone, but a world present, eternal, spiritual, out of which we come, to which we return, and in which we exist. The one purpose of life is to find paths into this world, or to make paths if there are none. One of the broadest is music. It is the commonest way of escape from "this muddy vesture of decay," — one that religion always keeps

open, and one that poetry and thought have ever trodden with delight.

It is a suggestive fact that the great thinkers in all ages speak for the most part alike on music, and agree in assigning to it the special function to which I refer. No one has written more profoundly upon it than Schopenhauer. Wagner regarded him as the first philosopher who assigned to music its true place and function. It may seem strange that the philosopher of despair should find a theme in a thing so essentially joyous. It is because his philosophy, whether true or not, plays about the foundations of things, and so finds itself a near neighbor to the profoundest of the arts. The Greeks put all knowledge within music; the Nine are Muses, and their dance and hymn and art are the play of the world; but philosophy carries it a step farther, and makes it the sign of the elemental laws of creation. It is not necessary to agree with Schopenhauer in his conception of the world as simply blind will in perpetual struggle with desire, destroying all things in its path that it may come into consciousness, thus turning existence into misery, — resistless will, interminable desire; one

crushing the other and cutting it short as it presses toward its goal, — a theory that illustrates many aspects of the world, but leaves its origin unexplained, and deprives its order of reason, for where there is order there must be reason, and where there is reason and order there must be consciousness. It is not necessary to believe this theory in order to agree with Schopenhauer that the present order of the world is one from which we are to escape, though we might wish to modify it by saying that this world is to be used as a pathway to a higher. He holds that in the contemplation of any art we are divested of our surroundings and behold the “real essence of things,” and so we are in a region of peace; we emerge from the world where will is forever striving to gratify desire, and come into the real and eternal world of rest. In this he is quite right, namely, that there is an escape from a transient and reposeless world; but the satisfaction comes, not from getting out of the sphere of the play of will, but rather by getting into the very heart of the will; or, if we adopt Schopenhauer’s idea of it, by getting into the centre of the whirling storm, where there is no motion. In simpler

words, rest is found by passing into a world where there is perfect obedience to certain fundamental laws of human life, such as love, sympathy, and reverence. Schopenhauer would escape will by the ministration of art which momentarily diverts us from the conflict of will and desire. Instead, we thus come into a world where there is full obedience to will, where will and desire become commensurate through perfect and spontaneous obedience. This is specially a function of the art of music, which has for its most imperative condition obedience. While accepting Schopenhauer's main thought, we reverse his application of it, and escape its dreary conclusions. He is partly correct in his conception of the world as something from which we need deliverance, and of music as one of the means; but he is wrong in ascribing the misery of the world to will, and escape from it as the way to rest; it is escaped only as we become one with will through obedience. He is again right in making will fundamental; it is the ultimate fact, that in which and by which all things exist. Religiously God is love; metaphysically God is will. Hence the first function and duty of creation is obedience; it is

the one thing that man or beast or tree or rock has to do. To obey is to fulfill creation; to obey perfectly is to come into oneness or harmony with all things, and in this harmony rest and peace are found. Creation realizes itself in perfect obedience to the laws of the eternal will. Then the spheres make music, and the "smallest orb like an angel sings."

Shakespeare, who never misses the heart of whatever he touches, says : —

" Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

These lines have the exactness of definition. The harmony of the universe is in our immortal souls, but it cannot be heard through the vesture of the body. The same thought appears in Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity:" "Touching musical harmony, . . . such is the force thereof, and so pleasing effects it hath in that very part of man that is most divine, that some have been thereby induced to think that the soul itself, by nature is, or hath in it, harmony." Shakespeare and Addison and many another poet caught with unerring instinct at the Pythagorean idea of the music of the spheres, which is by no means a fancy,

but a bit of solid philosophy. Schopenhauer, with cold, hard meaning, says that "the world might be called embodied music," and that "were we able to give a perfect and satisfactory explanation of music, we should also have a true philosophy of the world." Turn this about and it is even truer. If we could get at a perfect and satisfactory explanation of the world we should find it to be harmony, and that music would be its best exponent. The delight we find in music springs from the fact that we share in the harmony of creation, and have in some feeble degree reproduced it; and the measure of our delight is in exact proportion to the obedience to the laws involved, supplemented by the human feeling thrown into the expression, which may correspond to the feeling which God has put into his works.

If this discourse upon the metaphysics of the subject has not failed of its purpose, it has shown us that music is one of the paths by which we escape from the unrest of time and enter into the peace of eternity. I contend that this is what actually happens when we come under the power of true music. We are carried over into the world of the spirit,

the world of reality, the enduring and permanent world ; we feel its power, its repose, its satisfaction, because we are in the presence of obedience and harmony and sympathy, — things to which we are correlated in our higher nature. I do not care to assert that such an experience is religious, although it deals with the elements of religion, and enters its very temple. Music is the stuff of which religion is made. What is religion but reverence, obedience, love, and sympathy ; and what is music but these, — expressions of what is wrought into the fabric of creation and so finds an echo in our hearts ? Religion is the personal adoption of what music means.

The difficulty in any discussion of this sort is to persuade one's readers that one is not indulging in mere sentiment and fancy. I am willing to be accused of mysticism when I say with Schopenhauer that "the world is embodied music," but I refuse to admit that it is fancy or mere sentiment ; and when I assert that music is the type and expression of the eternal world I would be understood as speaking with as much exactness as if I were dealing with weights and measures. It would put us on the track of this truth to consider

the real meaning of the words that are constantly used in respect to music. They had their origin in clear and profound conceptions; and the fact that they originated with poets and philosophers but confirms their truthfulness. There is no better way of getting at the secret of music than to find out what the great thinkers meant by their use of certain terms that have been universally accepted. Philosophers and poets, from Pythagoras and Plato down, say in their own way the same thing, and each pass into the domain of the other; the poets speculate and the philosophers sing.

Plato in the "Republic" cautions us against an excessive use of music, especially of "sweet and soft and melancholy airs," lest the character become weak and irritable, — a wise caution, for music is Promethean fire which burns to consume unless handled carefully. It is never safe except as it is combined with severe studies, or is studied severely, not because it is a weak or weakening thing, but because it is so spiritual and so unworldly. In the same dialogue he says that "musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into

the secret places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul graceful; and also because he who has received this true education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions or faults in art or nature, and will receive into his soul the good, and become noble and good, and hate the bad even before he is able to know the reason why." And again he says in "Laches:" "When I hear a man discoursing of virtue who is a true man, and worthy of his theme, I deem such an one to be the true musician." Plato was a superior musical critic, and he rigidly excluded certain kinds as weakening and debasing, but insisted on what he called certain "harmonies." "Leave," he says, "the strain of necessity and the strain of freedom, the strain of the unfortunate and the strain of the fortunate, the strain of courage and the strain of temperance." That is, the harmonies are the expressions of these virtues, which are real things.

In this glance at music it may have occurred to our readers that the most effective references have taken us back into regions of time when there was no music in the modern sense of the word. What is named great music dates

since the seventeenth century. The music that Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne and Dryden and Collins heard bears slight relation to their expression of it if judged by modern standards; and yet no one since has written so truly and passionately of what they had as these great authors. In explanation, it may be that the real power of music lies in its elements and not in its combinations or artistic forms. There was poetry — real and full — before poetry was written. Never was there more faultless verse than to-day, but there is not now living a great poet using the English tongue. Given such poets as those named, they will take the elements of music, and, in an instinctive way, hear them in their most moving forms; — as Collins says in his memorable Ode: —

“Thy humblest reed could more prevail,
Had more of strength, diviner rage,
Than all which charms this laggard age.”

It is the province of genius to lend itself to what is intrinsically great and give it expression. The music of the early day awakened rhapsody because it was heard by souls capable of rhapsody.

Let us now listen to one who goes deeper, —

Amiel, poet, critic, philosopher, the Pascal of the nineteenth century. In that remarkable book, the "Journal Intime," he says: "This morning the music of a brass band which had stopped under my window moved me almost to tears. It exercised an indefinable nostalgic power over me; it set me dreaming of another world, of infinite passion and supreme happiness. Such impressions are the echoes of Paradise in the soul; memories of ideal spheres, whose sad sweetness ravishes and intoxicates the heart. O Plato! O Pythagoras! ages ago you heard these harmonies, surprised these moments of inward ecstasy, knew these divine transports. If music thus carries us to heaven, it is because music is harmony, harmony is perfection, perfection is our dream, and our dream is heaven." I cannot let these passionate words pass without calling attention to the solidity of the thought in them. Amiel was poetical and sensitive to the last degree, but he was at bottom a philosophical critic and a profound thinker. Starting with a feeling or sentiment, he lapses immediately into thought, and with clear vision pierces to the depths of the subject before him; and whatever he says has the hardness and weight of

severe argument. When he speaks of music as carrying us to heaven, he means to state a definite process; and when he indicates the steps, — harmony, perfection, the fulfillment of perfection, heaven, — he intends to make the assertion that music carries us into the world where these things are felt. He goes even deeper in another passage: "Harmony is the expression of right, order, law, and truth; it is greater than time and represents eternity."

Amiel was one of the freest thinkers in his free-thinking century. Church, creed, school, nationality, had little weight of prejudice with him; he was simply a voice echoing his thought, and his thought was what his own eye and soul revealed to him. When he speaks of music taking him into heaven, he means it to the full; and when he identifies music with right, order, law, and truth, he speaks as closely as does a chemist over his compounded gases.

No one has touched the secret of music more closely than Charles Kingsley. "Music," he says, "goes on certain laws and rules. Man did not make the laws of music; he has only found them out, and if he be self-willed and

break them there is an end of music instantly. Music is a pattern and type of heaven, and of the everlasting life of God which perfect spirits live in heaven — a life of melody and order in themselves ; a life in harmony with each other and with God.” This goes down to the bottom of the subject ; music is that obedience to law which secures order, harmony, oneness, and sympathy, the realization of which is heaven. Kingsley does not here speak as a preacher so much as a student of natural science. The point at which the harmonies of the external world touch the corresponding moral chords of our inner nature is a mystery ; it is a part of the greater question of the relation of sensation to consciousness. We only know that harmonies of sound touch the mind and suggest a moral harmony. So true is this that all these masters of thought whom I am quoting do not hesitate to name the result as heaven, by which they do not mean any place, nor any fulfillment of earthly expectation, nor any here nor there, but a moral condition which is the outcome of obedience to law.

Schopenhauer, as he emerges from the metaphysics of the subject, speaks of “ the un-

speaking fervor or inwardness of all music, by virtue of which it brings before us so near and yet so remote a paradise," and attributes it to "the quickening of our innermost nature." And again, when describing a certain kind of music, he says it "bespeaks a noble, magnanimous striving after a far-off goal, the fulfillment of which is eternal." Again, "Good music tells us what we are, or what we might be."

Quotation to the same effect might be made without end, but I will go no farther in this direction than to recall the famous words of which De Quincey says: "With the exception of the fine extravaganza on that subject in 'Twelfth Night,' I do not recollect more than one thing said adequately on the subject of music in all literature; it is a passage in the 'Religio Medici' of Sir Thomas Browne, and, though chiefly remarkable for its sublimity, has also a philosophic value, inasmuch as it points to the true theory of musical effects." The passage is as follows: —

"There is music wherever there is a harmony, order, or proportion; and thus far we may maintain the music of the spheres, for those well-ordered motions and regular paces,

though they give no sound to the ear, yet to the understanding they strike a note most full of harmony. Whatever is harmonically composed delights in harmony; which makes me much distrust the symmetry of those heads which disclaim against our church music. For myself, not only for my Catholic obedience, but my particular genius, I am obliged to maintain it, for even that vulgar and tavern music which makes one man merry, another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion and a profound contemplation of my Maker; there is something in it of divinity more than the ear discovers."

I pause in the quotation to remark that Sir Thomas here touches a common experience, namely, that music, poor as such, and designed for simple ends, will often arouse the purest and loftiest emotions. I take it that it is largely because the harmony is produced in the midst of material and moral discord, and that under such conditions it unlocks the heart down to its inmost recesses, and calls up that which is most remote from and most unlike the present.

A striking illustration of this experience is to be found in Dr. Bushnell's discourse on

“Religious Music” in “Work and Play.” Shall I ever forget hearing it in the dimly lighted and dingy old chapel of Yale College ! The voice and cadences more musical than the organ that was being dedicated, the swing of the sentences as regular as the movement of an orchestra, and as true to the keynote ; the argument varied, yet as sustained and harmonious as a symphony, its steady march broken at times by dashes of melody like that to which I refer. It is a description of the effect upon himself of mere shouting and echoes heard in the high Alps. The rhetoric of the passage has gone out of fashion, but is to be remembered along with Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, with prayers that it may come back again when one appears who is fit to use it. We forgot the instrument which was the occasion of the words, satisfied with the rhythmic flow of the sentences as they fell from his lips. This notable passage, in its rhythmic and melodic character, is an accurate illustration of a profound remark by Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie, that “every man has a rhythm in his walk, gesture, voice, modulation, and sentences, — a rhythm which is the natural expression of the man when all the

elements of his nature come into harmony, and the inner and the outward, the spiritual and the physical, flow together in perfect unison ;” for seldom has there been a man who was so set to music in his whole nature as was this great doctor of theology. But the point suggested by Sir Thomas Browne’s words in regard to “tavern music” is that the effect of music is not commensurate with its cause, the simplest often awakening the deepest emotions. There are, of course, reasons for this, which may at least be guessed. Is it the chords or the melody, the harmony or the sentiment, that moves one most deeply ? The melody interests us most, arouses the human part of us — tears or vows ; but is it not the harmony, or even one clear, pure tone, that awakens the religious sense, and unveils eternity ? It is, I take it, these chance harmonies or tones of unusual quality, sometimes heard in the simplest music, or even in the wind as it touches the boughs of trees, that so move us. It is true that much depends upon the hearer ; that, filled as the world is with all the elements and conditions of music, the heart of man is set to it all because he comprises all in himself, and one note or chord from without

will often start all the human strings into vibration.

But I will go on with the quotation from Sir Thomas Browne : —

“It [music] is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world and creatures of God, such a melody to the ear, as the whole world, well understood, would afford the understanding. In brief, it is a sensible fit of that harmony which intellectually sounds in the ears of God ; it unties the ligaments of my frame, takes me to pieces, dilates me out of myself, and by degrees, methinks, resolves me into heaven.”

Sir Thomas Browne loves to round his sentences, and he does it superbly ; but if this were his only excellence he would not be read as he has been for two hundred and fifty years. He well supports the title of philosopher. His conception of music as “an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world” is one of those thoughts which have always haunted great minds. It was felt by that father of the Church who said : “The heathen use a pipe or a flute for music, but the instrument of our God is the universe.”

Music most discloses its spiritual power in

its indirect effects. It is when it makes itself a servant that it becomes most heavenly. Thoughtful men, and those whose vocation it is to think, understand this well, and often put themselves in contact with music, — especially the orchestra, where the harmonies are many and full, — not in order to listen to it, but to be affected by it. They do not listen in the sense of following and noting it, but they let it “creep into their ears” and start them into thought on other themes. The soul and grace of many intellectual compositions have been drawn from music hardly heard, but inly felt. Beethoven says: “Music opens a portal to an intellectual world ready to encompass us, but which we may never encompass.” It makes the mind intuitive; it suggests the larger and nobler view; it discloses the relations of truths and spreads them out, and especially it unites and harmonizes them. This is its office. It is not an end in itself; it is not an art for art’s sake. Its office is not to tickle the ear with transient harmonies, but to reveal and to disclose eternal truths and realities. In a literal sense it brings all heaven before our eye; it is the language of eternity; it is both the witness of a spiritual world and

the way into it — a door through which we pass to find ourselves in the midst of eternal things, — truth, purity, obedience, love, adoration, — the realities that compose life and are symbolically wrought into the rhythm and harmony of the world.

A COCK TO ÆSCULAPIUS


"The secret of Jesus was the unswerving, uncompromising, practical idealism with which he faced the evils of life and the darkness of death, and refused to regard them as other than weapons in the hand of an omnipotent goodness which, in spite of them, and through them, is irresistibly realizing its divine purpose." — EDWARD CAIRD, LL. D., *Evolution of Religion*, ii. p. 88.

"All our better moods are prophetic of eternity for us. Justice feels itself rooted more deeply than the mountains are; it is of the very essence of love to be consciously everlasting; and faith feels as though it could die death after death, and only be the nigher God with every change." — WILLIAM MOUNTFORD.

"The truth of the life to come will be verified in the same way; as Aristotle tells us, we must practice immortality. We have theorized about it, argued about it, hunted the universe over for proofs of it, sought it, alas! in many incantations and juggleries; suppose we stop speculating about the immortal life, and begin to practice it. That is not a mystical injunction. Live it, and it will prove itself." — REV. WASHINGTON GLADDEN, LL. D., *The Practice of Immortality*, p. 26.

A COCK TO ÆSCULAPIUS

WHAT Socrates meant in saying to Crito, "I owe a cock to Æsculapius; will you remember to pay the debt?" has been a matter of much speculation: such as that it was a mere jest; that it referred to a literal debt; that it was a total relapse into superstition. These explanations do not cover the case. Grant a sly humor as he turned to Crito, — it does not lessen the sublime gravity of the moment. The key is to be found in a previous remark. When the fatal cup was presented to him, he said to the jailer, "What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god?" Being denied, he said: "Yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to that other world; may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me," and then, "he cheerfully drank off the poison" and went "to the joys of the blessed." But why an offering to Æsculapius? Simply because it agreed with his high mood. He dies with cheerfulness and



faith in the higher powers,—that is, *religiously*. Let the offering be to the god whose medicine I have just drunk, for it takes me not unwillingly into another world. Such seems to be his meaning. It was not a tribute to custom, nor a return to superstition, nor something to profit him at the last, but a religious act in that supreme hour when one's nature calls out for religious expression. It does not matter whether Socrates himself or Plato is to be held accountable for the masterly close of the "Phædo." If Plato wrote biographically, he was careful not to omit any detail of a religious character; if he wrote as a philosopher, he held it to be a necessary close to his argument for immortality. In either case his insight is as perfect as the art. If we mistake not, nearly all great men approach the close of life in a distinctly religious way. A full-rounded humanity demands such an end, and the great delineators of character accord it to all except the basest. Even Falstaff cried out, "God, God, God!" and "'a babbled of green fields," but whether of those in the Twenty-third Psalm, or those of his childhood, does not matter; Shakespeare saw that it was fit to put him amid the hal-

lowed associations of early years, and make them call out a cry of nature after God.

There is a deal of science that reduces death to a mere physical event of no significance ; but science has not yet compassed man. This instinctive tendency to speak religiously — as did Socrates — when death approaches, sheds light on a dispute now going on as to the nature of man. Is he the creature of his environment, and does he share in its fate of finiteness ? or does he belong to a divine and eternal order of which religion is the exponent ? The natural experience of man in this crisis leans heavily to the latter view, because death is so entirely a natural event ; and it is in the region of nature that we to-day look for confirming testimony. It has long been called the honest hour. What a man says at that time he believes. What he feels is sincere. The mists of time and circumstance are swept away, and all things stand out as they are. The entire man comes to himself, and he cannot be kept from expression. The flood-gates of tenderness open, and nature pours itself out in all its fullness. Grudges are forgotten ; no lie passes the lips. He returns to the genuine type of humanity. He passes

judgment on himself, condemns the evil he has done, and craves nothing but forgiveness. He makes great decisions and achieves final conquests. He puts himself on the side of all that is pure and good, with no proviso or half-heartedness; and when at last he goes hence, he is at peace with God and man and with himself also, for he has come back to primal relations that were meant to be eternal. This is brought out in "The Eclipse of Faith," the author of which abridges the chapter in "Woodstock" where Scott so aptly touches this point: "Do you remember the passage in which our old favorite represents the Episcopalian Rochecliffe and the Presbyterian Holdenough meeting unexpectedly in prison, after many years of separation, during which one had thought the other dead? How sincerely glad they were, and how pleasantly they talked; when lo! an unhappy reference to the bishopric of Titus gradually abated the fervor of their charity, and inflamed that of their zeal, even till they at last separated in mutual dudgeon, and sat glowering at each other in their distant corners with looks in which the 'Episcopalian and Presbyterian' were much more evident than 'Christian;'

and so they persevered till the sudden summons to them and their fellow prisoners, to prepare for instant execution, dissolved as with a charm the anger they had felt, and ‘Forgive me, O my brother,’ broke from their lips as they took what they thought would be a last farewell.” And so death annihilates the deepest hatred, as if charged to open wide the portals for entrance into the world of love.

Now, it is a great thing that one can thus return to the starting-point, and reestablish the integrity of his nature, and take up again its broken ideals. It is easy to say that it were better if it had been done earlier, and easy also to sneer at this time-enforced experience, but the sneer is shallow, as most sneers are. Look at it more calmly. What is truer than that there come to men hours of self-revelation, — why, they cannot tell ; great experiences also that open men to the bottom of their souls, when they look down into each other to find a hidden man — unsuspected but real ? The moment passes, but, as a flash of lightning at night shows the entire landscape, the man is first and forever revealed. Then life and the custom of the world fold around him and he becomes once more what he had

been ; yet not the same, for the divineness of his nature has been disclosed. It is then also that, as by instinct, he asserts a personal God and a spiritual universe : two things that make life explicable as he looks back, and possible as he looks forward. The rite of extreme unction is not a careless custom, and is a superstition only as it is suffered to become one. It is administered on the ground that the first and main question of the priest is answered : “ Do you die at peace with God and man ? ” Then the assurance of safe entrance into eternity can be granted ; and what better passport could be given ? Thus, in a way, one is oriented and brought into harmony with both worlds. The rite means that a rational and immortal being comes into accord with all other beings. Thus the unity of creation is preserved, and man becomes a harmonious factor in a divine system. Montaigne, — worldling as he was, — when the hour came, called for the last rites of the Church, and having risen as the Host was lifted up, fell back upon his pillow, dead. Thus while he died a Christian death, if the Church can make one, in life he descanted on death as a philosopher, and said many wise things, — as well he might, for he was im-

bued with a most unusual sense of it, — to such a degree that, as he says, being a meditative man, if anything came into his head when no more than a league's distance from his house, he made haste to write it down, because he was not certain to live till he came home. But in all his pagan prattle of death he never belittles it, but ranks it with birth, and declares that life is only a preparation for it. He said: "In the judgment I make of another man's life, I always observe how he carried himself at his death; and the principal concern I have for my own is that I may die well, — that is, patiently and tranquilly." In the manner of his going away, he was not making sure of heaven, but, as a clear-sighted man brought to still clearer vision by having reached the end and summit of life, he confessed that the proper way to leave the world was by acknowledgment of the supreme truths. No priest nor holy oil is needed to attest or perfect the act. Death itself prescribes the duty, and by its augustness inspires its fulfillment. The soul itself points the way, and tells what is to be done and undone, and so strives to dress itself in its most seemly robes as it goes hence. "Too late," does any one say?

It will be time to say that when it is proved that nature fools a man when he is most himself and in his sorest strait. But we are not contending for the safety of it, but only that in the most honest hour of life man instinctively bears witness to the fact that he is akin to the infinite and eternal ; that the divine spark never goes out, or, if it finally goes out, it burns brightest at the end. The entire sanity of the Bible upon this subject is significant. The narrative of Christ's life begins with a few legendary words on his birth, but grows minute on his approach to death, when every word is set down with careful accuracy. It does not matter where or when Christ was born, but what he said and did at the last is of infinite moment, because he then most fully revealed himself. One half of his words could better be spared than two sentences spoken upon the cross : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ; " and, " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit ; " — one, the supremest height human love ever reached ; the other, all that can be said or known of destiny, but it is enough.

It marks an idle and a blind age and the oncoming of a degenerate one when men lose

that august sense of time and death that all men feel when left to the simplicity of their nature. We do not to-day treat a great fact fairly. We brave it with mock courage, and lower our nature by false estimates of a humanly cosmic event. We shut life within scientific measurements and functional activities until neither beginning nor end inspires us with wonder and awe, — quoting protoplasm for one and annihilation for the other. Or we prate about living well and leaving death to take care of itself, without question as to what life is or means. Not so do the great masters round out life, but keep it up to its dignity at the last. Shakespeare dismisses great souls with triumphal honors, and lets their mistakes and defeats stand in the greatness of their real nature. With infallible touch he sets the true note to life and death in that most solemn of all dirges :

“Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.”

Surely one should pre-count them — small or great as may be. It becomes us as the years shorten the span, that we should number our days, — not afraid, nor grieving over the dissolving tabernacle, nor in sullen resignation,

nor yet in rapt joy over a future that may not be so rich and certain as we have dreamed, — for surely it will not be better than life has prepared the capacity for, — not in such ways, but rather for the moral values bound up with it. It is not an outworn prayer: “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is; that I may know how frail I am.” It is a prayer much needed and sorely neglected in these days of rich prosperity. When all things are going well, and one is hedged about with so many guards against the ills of life, the great disturbing forces are forgotten. The pangs of strenuous labor by which man is born into his heritage of strength are no longer felt, and the fatal slumber of inaction steals over us. All things are so sure and easy and comfortable that the future is drawn into our soft visions and made as real as the things we handle. In this way we slip out of the kingdom of God, and hear no longer either the calls of duty or the notes of warning struck out by time and circumstance. Christ dropped no plummet deeper into human life than in that parable which grows truer with time, and more awful as men heap up riches heedless of

their divine use. There is a great deal of this tearing down of barns and building greater going on at present, and the languorous chant, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," mingles strangely with the strenuous notes of work that fill the air. The present uses to which wealth is put reach far beyond the economic questions in which it is involved. They reach into our *nature*, and turn it aside from the path that leads toward life. The awful possibilities are couched in words that depict both condition and destiny, — "thou fool." He may not die this night; it may be worse than that. He may live on, and sink deeper into his downy ease and count his goods with more fatal presumption; each passing day the great meanings of life and time may grow fainter and fainter, until the very sense of humanity — his own and that of others — dies out within him.

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